

Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Winter

(July-September) 1995, no 57

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WINNER
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WARNING

The activities covered by this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.

Cover Winter afternoon on the Labyrinth, Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park, Tasmania. *Grant Dixon*

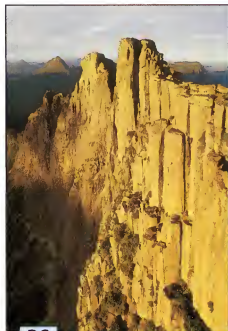
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VICTORIA'S DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION & NATURAL RESOURCES

An anachronism whose time has passed?

In the 1970s and 1980s the destruction of huge tracts of Tasmanian wilderness was carried out by a vast bureaucratic monolith with the full sanction of that State's Government, Establishment and much of its population. Today, Tasmania's once all-powerful Hydro-Electric Commission is a toothless (Tasmanian) tiger, sidelined (rendered extinct?) by the overwhelming evidence concerning its wasteful excesses: it has left a legacy of massive debt and a significant surplus capacity for electricity generation, not to mention swathes of destruction through Tasmania's greatest wilderness. (In fact, the HEC has been forced into exile and now acts as 'consultant' for similar dam-building projects in developing South-east Asian countries!)

On the other side of Bass Strait the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources has emerged as 'the HEC of Victoria'. A bureaucratic dinosaur reminiscent of the HEC at its most unrestrained, it is leaving trails of destruction as it rumbles unchecked through Victoria's remaining forests. And the cost to the public, present and future, could be even greater than we can already see.

Its contradictory title reflects the hopelessness of its assigned dual tasks of 'conserving' Victoria's natural wonders while at the same time overseeing their commercial exploitation as 'natural resources'. The DCNR has opted largely for the latter.

Independent academic studies are beginning to reveal the nature and extent of the DCNR's (read 'the taxpayer's') subsidisation of the timber industry (at least \$50 million a year, and possibly as much as \$385 million, according to one of the latest studies). Victoria's Local Government Board, in its Gippsland Area Review last November, reported that in the Shire of Orbost alone the movement of logs to processing points involves over three million vehicle kilometres, and over 40 million tonne kilometres, each year. The board concluded that 'companies harvesting timber from Crown land derive considerable benefit from municipal infrastructure, without making a significant contribution to its development and maintenance, thus unfairly burdening the community'. This is but one example. Most DCNR activity is devoted to administering commercial exploitation of wild Victoria's natural resources and to overseeing private, commercial activity.

However, the DCNR restricts public knowledge of the detail of its activities. The Parliamentary Committee which compiled the *Report on the Environmental Impact of*

Commonwealth Activities and Places in Victoria, tabled in Parliament last November, noted regarding the DCNR's submission that '...the lateness and insubstantial nature of the formal submission effectively hindered the work of the Committee...[and] in effect constitutes suppression of information'.

The limited factual information it does supply to the public makes it apparent that there is much that the DCNR would not wish widely publicised. In its 1993-94 Annual Report, for example, it is noted that the money owed to the DCNR by private operators logging public land in Victoria for saw-logs has increased substantially. (It has doubled, to \$7.2 million, in two years!) The current level is described in a report to DCNR staff for 1993-94 by the DCNR's secretary as 'undesirably high' and a 'key concern'. The same report notes that hardwood timbers were 'harvested at the maximum sustainable level' over the year and that prices rose by 16 per cent. Royalty rates, however, markedly failed to keep pace, rising only four per cent over the same period.

The 1993-94 Annual Report of the DCNR shows that 1 015 121 m³ of hardwood saw-logs were taken from public land during the year. This figure has increased by more than 24 per cent in two years and compares with an average sustainable annual yield rate of only 743 400 m³ given in the *Forests (Timber Harvesting) Act 1990*.

Other items of concern from the 1993-94 Annual Report include the acknowledgement that surveys have found that ten per cent of logged native forests have not been satisfactorily 'stocked' with seedling re-growth and have been 'scheduled for remedial treatment'. (The cost of such treatment is not included in the calculation of royalties paid by loggers.) The report also notes 130 breaches of environmental care provisions due to timber harvesting during the year. (How many go undetected and/or unreported?) An audit of forestry practice on public land carried out by the DCNR in 1994 found a number of causes for criticism, including that 'Landing rehabilitation was often inadequate', as was rehabilitation of logging tracks and roads.

The result is that in just one generation the DCNR, including that body under a range of earlier names, has overseen the degrading of Victoria's Alps and other wild places to their present pitiful state. It is not surprising that there are those in the green movement who consider that the DCNR is not merely permitting an unacceptable and unsustainable level of development in the region, but is actively engaged in a concerted effort to

destroy wilderness outside the very limited protected areas with a view that no holds will be barred once the Alps are 'too damaged for anything else'. (Despite the failure of the Land Conservation Council Wilderness Special Investigation and subsequent government decisions in 1992 to protect all areas of wilderness and remoteness value, the DCNR is acting as though all areas of wilderness value have been protected and that development may proceed elsewhere on public land regardless of wilderness and remoteness values.) Certainly the DCNR has permitted extensive damage to the Alps, and particularly to East Gippsland. The region is criss-crossed with major roads, not merely four-wheel-drive tracks, that have been provided to facilitate private, commercial activity. St Johns wort, thistles, nettles and, particularly, blackberries have followed and are now rampant. No single major feature is more than a few kilometres from a road or vehicle track any longer. Some areas, such as on the Great Divide west of Mt Selwyn, have so dense a network of roads that they resemble mazes. Each new edition of a map reveals the speed and extent of this cancer which has reached such a level that even the enjoyment of four-wheel-drive enthusiasts has been dampened.

Regional staff of the DCNR are imbued with a 1950s attitude to 'developing' the bush at all costs. For example, the first item in a recent issue of *CNR Scene* (one of seemingly countless DCNR public relations publications) celebrates the opening of a bridge by which 'two-wheel-drive vehicles can now drive from Omeo to Dargo', and goes on to say: 'And foremost in his mind, with Madigan's Bridge officially open, [the local DCNR supervisor] is persuading people to construct

Environmental impact statement

Wild is printed on Ozone paper, which is made of 75 per cent post-consumer waste that has been recycled and oxygen-bleached. We are not aware of another gloss paper suitable for magazine publishing that includes as high a level of recycled post-consumer waste. As a suitably heavy weight of Ozone is not available for the cover, that section is printed on Topkote paper, which is made of oxygen-bleached 40 per cent recycled pre-consumer waste and 10 per cent post-consumer waste. We recycle the film used in the printing process. *Wild* staff run an environmentally aware office. Waste paper is recycled, printer ribbons are re-inked and waste is kept to an absolute minimum. We invite your comments and recommendations; please contact the Managing Editor.

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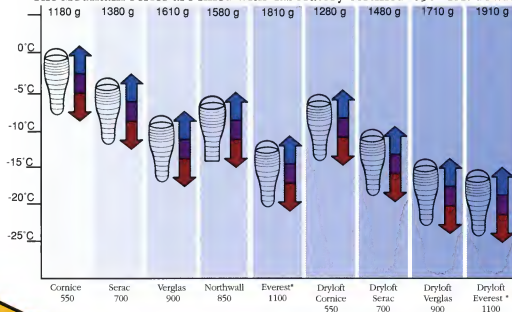
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a two-wheel [sic], round-trip track...to take in...[popular bushwalking destinations] Grant and Talbotville.' Presumably this is merely the tip of the iceberg of many *ad hoc*, death-by-a-thousand-cuts-type works conducted by DCNR staff around the State, with wilderness being the loser.

The summit of East Gippsland's popular Mt Nungong is another environmental low point. The old, relatively discreet, fire tower has been replaced with a steel and glass monstrosity in its own Cyclone-fenced compound. In addition, there is a derelict hut, a dunny, and a steel trig point. And to complete the picture the surrounding area has been bulldozed clear of all offending vegetation.

High on nearby Mts Bindi and Tambo the DCNR has carved eyecore helpdams for the bush.

The hidden monetary cost of such practices, not to mention the obvious environmental one, is enormous.

One does not have to travel far in East Gippsland to see the extent of this blight. The DCNR has large regional offices in both Baimsdale and Orbost, and offices in Swifts Creek as well as in nearby, equally small, Omeo, among many other places. Their parking areas are cluttered with millions of dollars' worth of near-new, expensive DCNR vehicles. Local people can cite numerous examples of DCNR profligacy, time wasting, misallocation of labour and materials, and excessive use of resources. The DCNR will tell you that it has decentralised, 'slimmed down' and heavily reduced staffing levels. It is less forthcoming on the fact that substantially more work, such as blackberry spraying, is now subcontracted to private operators.

The current Victorian Government prides itself on what it sees as its business acumen and financial management skills. How then can it remain unmoved by the presence of such an obvious blight on its efforts to 'balance the books' as the DCNR? When this question was put to one member of the government he responded that control of the DCNR was seen by the government as 'a sensitive area' as it considered a powerful DCNR as central to its policy of seeking to buy the crucial 'green vote'. Given the DCNR's predilection for developing 'natural resources' at the expense of 'conservation', this is the ultimate irony.

The Victorian Government, however, has exhibited a marked inclination to 'sell the family farm' at the first indication of economic adversity. Against this background, conservationists are concerned at persistent rumours that the government is considering the privatisation of part of the DCNR's domain, possibly even National Parks!

Another matter for concern is the polarisation within the ranks of the DCNR. The rednecks, it appears, are 'in' whereas the relatively few responsible professionals, particularly those with a conscience and a voice, are decidedly 'out'.

The DCNR's idea of 'conservation' appears to be public relations and marketing. Its 'Alps for everyone' slogan is just that. In practice the Alps are for commercial developers and those wishing to drive all over them in the family Commodore. Many DCNR public

relations efforts would be laughable if they weren't costing us so dearly. You can drive for hours through vast tracts of forest suddenly to come upon DCNR signs announcing that the pocket-handkerchief section you've just entered is, for example, the Mt Sarah Conservation Reserve. Near Mt Nuniong, in another remote situation, a massive fire-break with Alpine National Park signs on one side of it makes a similar distinction between otherwise indistinguishable tracts of forest.

The Victorian Alps include some of the finest high country in Australia. The time has come for all wilderness lovers to call on the Victorian Government to rein in the DCNR. As a first step the government might be asked to recognise the contradictory nature of the DCNR's charter and divide it into two independent organisations, both obliged responsibly to manage a fragile and beautiful region in the interests of all people, present and future.

A win for the wild

In the last issue, no 56, I announced that we had begun to use much heavier paper for the cover. With the same issue we also introduced another change; one significant for the environment. We recently learnt that the process used to achieve a glossy or satin effect on the covers of many magazines, including *Wild*, is environmentally detrimental. It usually involves the application of a UV varnish or a plastic coating. The former results in the release of toxic fumes into the atmosphere. The latter prevents the covers from being readily recycled. Instead, we have located a water-based process. It may not be quite as glossy but we can sleep better at night for having chosen it. We trust you will agree that it's worth it.

Winners all

We promised gift packages (each containing a set of *Wild* greeting cards, a guidebook cover and a *Wild* poster) for those who sent in the first 20 readership surveys we received. The following are the winners: JM Lenon, Swan Hill, Vic; G Dyer, Wheelers Hill, Vic; Will Power, Fairfield, Vic; Simon McInnes, East Richmond, Vic; A Buyck, Ivanhoe, Vic; Mark Kadatz, Toowoomba, Qld; D Kneen, Wangaratta, Vic; Linda Jones, Devonport, Tas; Bill Caskey, Forestville, NSW; Frank Gomez, Mt Riverview, NSW; M Gergel, West Hobart, Tas; Chris Little, Newtown, NSW; Joanne Adams, Richmond, NSW; Glenn Sanders, Avalon Beach, NSW; D Jones, Port Lincoln, SA; John Cowan, Aldgate, SA; and Helena Godsall, Queenstown, Tas.

Phoney war

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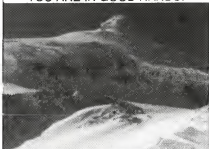
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Mark Baker on Ordeal by Fur (25) [Photo Ralph Lindsay]

Paddy Pallin

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UP THE CREEK

Upsurge in canyon rescues

Alpine Track's new name

After years of 'unofficial' status, the Alpine Walking Track from Walhalla in Victoria to Namadgi in the ACT is finally 'open'. The Australian Alps Liaison Committee, a body intended to co-ordinate the management of Australia's highest ranges, held an official opening for the track, now referred to as the Alps Walking Track, in early April. New markers bearing the inscription 'Australian Alps National Park' are being spread along the 655 kilometres of the track which takes about eight weeks to walk and which has now become one of Australia's most popular long walking tracks.



Corrections and amplifications

From *Wild* no 55: the table in Will Steffen's article 'Still on Top' omits Kynan Bazley (New Zealand) from the successful party members on the 1994 Bhagirathi III expedition. The three team members spent three nights on the mountain's South-west Pillar before bivvying just below the summit. While John Wilde's Gear Survey 'Short Plastic Kayaks' describes the Perception Pirouette and Corsica boats as being without platform foot-rests, these have subsequently become available. Far more expensive versions of these boats, sold only in the USA, also come with nose cones as standard, unlike the locally manufactured equivalents. From *Wild* no 56: The girth of the giant Touchwood Tree at Ellery Creek in East Gippsland is not the largest in Victoria as was stated in the Editorial. That title is held by an Otway messmate with a girth of 27 metres. The phone number for the Kowmung Committee listed in the Green Pages Action Box on page 27 is incorrect. The correct number is (02) 267 8185.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Canyoning risks

The dramatic upsurge in the popularity of canyoning in the Blue Mountains has resulted in fears of a corresponding increase in the number of accidents and rescues. The National Parks & Wildlife Service has reported that three recent rescues have highlighted the dangers of canyoning after rain and in areas where retreat is impossible. Two rescues last summer were the result of canyoneers entering dangerously flooded canyons; in both cases rain had been falling steadily for some time before the parties set off and canyon flood warnings had in one case been issued the previous day. A third rescue was of a canyoneer whose figure-eight abseil device locked unexpectedly metres below the lip of the final waterfall in

Empress Canyon at Wentworth Falls, the second report of such an occurrence on this waterfall. The victim was rescued after an hour in the cold water suffering from mild hypothermia.

The NPWS urges all canyoneers to ensure that they are equipped with the right gear—including rescue equipment—and that they have the knowledge to avoid hazardous situations or perform a self-rescue if required.

Engineers Track

Blue Mountains walkers will be pleased to learn of the restoration of one of the oldest tracks in the area, the Engineers Track north of Mt Victoria. Dating from the 1860s, the track had been allowed to fall into disrepair over the decades to the extent that large sections had disappeared completely. Recent work by volunteers, however, has restored much of the track to a usable condition.

The track can be found by following the road from Mt Victoria to Bell for six kilometres until the Hartley Vale Road is reached; roughly opposite this turn-off is a dirt road that branches off to the east and runs up to the railway line. A metal sign shows the way. Just over the railway line is a grassy embankment. The beginning of the track can be seen down the slope.

At present the track is only suitable for experienced walkers, who should watch carefully for red tags and metal signs. After crossing the Grose River two kilometres from the start, the track continues to a point just short of the Blue Gum Forest/Victoria Falls track at Burra Korāin Flat. It is hoped that this gap may be closed at some time in the future.

Neil Paton

TASMANIA

More 'Treseder's Travels'

Tiger walker/paddler/cyclist/climber Peter Treseder has run the length of Tasmania, traversing the heart of the State's

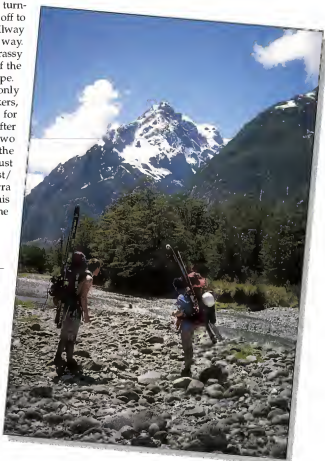
wilderness and climbing three of its major peaks; Mt Ossa, Mt Anne and Federation Peak. His route was: Penguin (on the north coast), Penguin-Cradle Track, Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair Track (including Mt Ossa), the King William Range, Rasselas Track, Scotts Peak Dam, Mt Anne, Arthur Plains Track, Eastern Arthurs (including Federation Peak), Old River, Melaleuca, South Coast Track, Cockle Creek (on the south coast). Mainland walkers who aim to tick these classic bushwalking destinations would usually allow a number of successive summers to visit them all. Treseder took four days.

Inspired by Treseder's feats of endurance, four-times marathon kayaking and multi-sport world champion John Jacoby ran Tasmania's South Coast Track from Cockle Creek to Melaleuca in March. The run, which took about 21 hours, included a side-trip to New Harbour by way of the New Harbour Range, an ascent of Mt Beattie and an overnight bivvy stop at Cox Bight.

OVERSEAS

The big ski

Kiwi mountain guide Geoff Wayatt, 48, and his 20-year-old son Chris made the first ski



Geoff, left, and Chris Wayatt inspect New Zealand's Mt Tutoko before swooping from its 2746 metre summit to complete the first ski descent. Geoff Wayatt collection. Above, Australian Alps Walking Track marker.



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Wild Diary

Information about rucksack-sports events for publication in this department should be sent to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

| | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------|
| July | 1 Trip leadership workshop (for teachers, instructors and leaders) C | Vic | (03) 459 4277 |
| | 1-2 Basic skills instructor training (part 1) C | NSW | (02) 949 2414 |
| | 15 Metrogaine R | Vic | (03) 890 4352 |
| | 29 Cabramatta Tour S | NSW | (064) 53 8721 |
| | 30 Kingsport Classic S | Vic | (056) 24 2361 |
| August | 5 Canoe Polo Victorian Schools Championships C | Vic | (03) 882 2115 |
| | Examiners' workshop (for ACF instructors only) C | Vic | (03) 459 4277 |
| | 5-6 South Australian 24-hour Championships R | SA | (08) 269 7558 |
| | 6 Proficiency courses/testing C | Vic | (03) 459 4277 |
| | Mt Hotham to Dinner Plain S | Vic | (03) 398 0316 |
| | 12 Paddy Pallin Classic S | NSW | (02) 416 7334 |
| | 12-hour Rogaine | NSW | (042) 26 5544 |
| | 12-13 24-hour Rogaine | WA | (09) 275 4734 |
| | 12 and 19 Senior instructor course C | Vic | (03) 459 4277 |
| | 13 Razorback Rush S (Mt Stirling) | Vic | |
| | 19 Snowgaine R | Vic | (03) 890 4352 |
| | 20 Rocky Valley Rush S | Vic | (060) 27 1503 |
| | 26 Kangaroo Hoppet, Australian Birkbeiner, Joey Hoppet S | Vic | (057) 57 3103 |
| September | 2 Advanced white-water skills (for teachers, instructors and leaders) C | Vic | (03) 459 4277 |
| | 2-3 Basic skills instructor assessment C | NSW | (044) 65 1089 |
| | 9 Spring 12-hour Rogaine | Vic | (03) 890 4352 |
| | Brown Brothers Mt Hotham to Falls Creek S | Vic | (03) 527 4889 |
| | 9-10 New South Wales 24-hour Championships R | NSW | (042) 26 5544 |
| | 10 Kosciuszko Tour S | NSW | (06) 282 4468 |
| | 15-17 Victorian Life Be In It Marathon Championships C | Vic | (03) 459 4277 |
| | 16-17 White-water proficiency training C | ACT | (02) 949 2414 |
| | White-water instructor courses—intake C | Vic | (03) 459 4277 |
| October | 3-6 Ski & Outdoor Trade Show (trade only) | ACT | (03) 482 1206 |
| | 7 12-hour Rogaine | ACT | (06) 248 7142 |
| | 12-hour Rogaine | WA | (09) 275 4734 |
| | 7-8 Basic skills instructor courses—intake C | Vic | (03) 459 4277 |
| | 8- and 24-hour Rogaines | Qld | (07) 268 3338 |
| | 14 Spring 8-hour Rogaine | Vic | (03) 890 4352 |
| | 21-22 White-water instructor courses—assessment C | Vic | (03) 459 4277 |
| | 28 12-hour Rogaine | SA | (08) 269 7558 |

B bushwalking C canoeing M multisports R rogaining RC rockclimbing S skiing

WILD INFORMATION

descent of one of New Zealand's most challenging mountains last December. After a battle with thigh-deep mud on the walk in from Milford Sound, the father and son team climbed to the 2746 metre summit of Mt Tutoko in Fiordland on the South Island before making a full ski decent broken only by the need to crampon round an 80 metre



Chris Wayatt on cloud nine during the first ski descent of Mt Tutoko, New Zealand. Geoff Wayatt

ice-cliff in the middle of the mountain's South Face. Chris Wayatt is believed to be the youngest person to climb the mountain. His father was the first person to ski from the summit of Mt Cook.

Lost River

Thirteen experienced Australian cavers, including *Wild's* Contributing Editor for caving Stephen Buntin, are hoping to break the world cave depth record during an expedition to the Chilcholla caves in southern Mexico in December. The team already holds the record for the deepest exploration by Australian cavers—946 metres below the surface—set during an earlier expedition to the same area. This year's Lost River Expedition has the aim of linking this previous discovery with the recently found 'master system' which lies lower in the extraordinary limestone valley that has become the Himalayas of world caving. Success for the expedition, which is led by 'the Rheinhold Messner of caving', Alan Warild (see profile in *Wild* no 52), would establish the cave as having a depth of more than one vertical kilometre—an achievement somewhat akin to that of discovering a new 8000 metre peak. With luck, the system may even prove to be deeper than Europe's Réseau Jean-Bernard—the world's deepest cave at -1535 metres. ■

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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LOSING THEIR MARBLES

Important win for the environment in East Gippsland



Knocked out

East Gippsland's Marble Gully has been saved from mining, at least for the time being. As reported in *Wild* no 56, the Victorian Government had intended to issue a permit under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act* to permit quarrying in the area, which is home to a unique community of plants including a number of species found only at that site. However, objectors, including the Victorian National Parks Association, took the case to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, which promptly found in the objectors' favour on the grounds that the application to quarry marble was fundamentally flawed.

If these flaws are overcome it is possible that opponents of the mining will have to return to the tribunal, but the question of access to the site of the proposed quarry will be particularly difficult for developers to overcome as it lies through private property owned by one of the objectors.

The issue is seen by conservationists as a crucial test of the Victorian Government's

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. As it is, however, there are other important concerns about the government's attitude to, and application of, the Act. The VNPA reports that during 1994 the Scientific Advisory Committee gave final recommendations to list 44 items under the Act, which have not been so listed; and that there are a further six items which received final recommendations for listing in 1993 but have not yet been listed.

Wetlands washed up?

The World Wide Fund for Nature has launched a year-long campaign to spur State governments and the Federal Government into preserving Australia's important wetlands before Brisbane hosts an international wetlands conference next March. The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance will bring together signatories to the 'Ramsar Convention' for the protection of wetlands under which Australia was the first country to nominate an area for protection in 1971. The WWF warns that Australia, like

The Howitt Spur, Victoria, epitomises the World Heritage qualities of the Australian Alps for which a campaign is seeking recognition. Glenn van der Knijff

Japan in 1993, risks international embarrassment if it does not do more to protect its internationally significant wetlands before it plays host to environmental delegates at the conference. Almost 60 per cent of Australia's 42 nominated Ramsar Convention sites are considered to be under threat while a further 400+ wetland areas remain unprotected. Highest on the danger list are wetlands threatened by a proposed armaments dump and chemical complex at Point Wilson, south-west of Melbourne, for which tenders were recently called by the Victorian Government. See Action Box item 1.

World Heritage Alps

The campaign to have the Australian Alps nominated for World Heritage listing has moved from the field and into the corridors of

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power thanks in part to a grant made to the Australian Conservation Foundation by *Wild* for the express purpose of furthering the bid. Following the publication of Jamie Kirkpatrick's report on the World Heritage values of the Alps—values which rated higher than those in many areas already given World Heritage protection—the VNPA led a coalition of conservation groups (including the ACF) and National Parks associations in an effort to educate key ministers, shadow ministers and bureaucrats about the importance of protecting the region. The campaign has had wide support although the problems associated with the fact that the region spreads over two States and one Territory are a hindrance. The only solution would appear to be decisive action by the Federal Government, which has not been forthcoming so far.

In March Bob Carr and the ALP won office in the NSW State election on a platform which included support for the Australian Alps and Blue Mountains World Heritage nominations. Those involved with these campaigns have urged the new Premier to take early action by lobbying the Federal Government to ensure a speedy nomination for these areas. See Action Box item 2.

Logging collapse

After months of furious argument, an intimidating blockade by forestry workers of Parliament House in Canberra, huge rallies by conservationists in the capital cities, electoral damage in at least one by-election (in which a large swing was recorded to the green candidate), legal action against the granting of wood-chip licences, and violence and arrests in forests throughout the country, the wood-chip debate seems to be back to square one.

After making early promises concerning the phasing out of wood-chipping in native forests and the protection of up to 1300 of these areas in parks and reserves, the Federal Government steadily caved in to the forestry industry to the point where fewer than 200 of the areas recommended for protection are likely to be saved. Furthermore, little has been done to check the power of State 'natural resources' departments—particularly those of Victoria and Tasmania—which spend so much time and (public) money in promoting and subsidising the logging industry despite overwhelming evidence that they are 'flogging a dead horse'. (See Editorial.)

Over recent months, both the electoral office of the federal treasurer and the Tasmanian State Government have distributed logging industry propaganda in the guise of 'fact sheets' while the Victorian Department of Conservation & Natural Resources has continued to fight tooth and nail against Freedom of Information requests for documentation of its accounting practices and forest policies. This is perhaps not surprising given the reported admission in March by a DCNR

senior forester and wildlife planner that East Gippsland coupes classified as being of high sensitivity due to rain forest values had been knowingly logged despite government policy that they should be avoided, and a government report confirming that taxpayers are subsidising the Victorian logging industry by up to \$6 million a year through road maintenance alone. (By coincidence, this figure corresponds to the net 1993 profit of the major wood-chip exporter Harris-Daishowa.) A draft management plan for the forests of East Gippsland which was circulated during March by the State Government was widely criticised for maintaining the status quo for the industry.

Given that little has changed in the way governments are managing the last of Australia's native forests, we can expect the whole issue to flare up again in a few months' time when next year's wood-chip licences are issued. See Action Box item 3.

Forest poster

The VNPA is seeking donations to help it to produce a full-page colour poster of threaten-

ed East Gippsland forest for inclusion in a major newspaper. It is hoped that the poster may have a similar impact to that of Peter Dombrowski's famous photo of Rock Island on the Franklin River which seemed to adorn every conservationist's wall during the Wild Rivers campaign of the early 1980s. Donors' names will be listed on the poster (unless otherwise requested), which will feature a photograph by renowned Victorian wilderness photographer David Tatnall. A minimum donation of \$100 is requested although any amount will be gratefully received. See Action Box item 4.

Vanishing cockatoo

The Bird Observers Club of Australia reports that the number of glossy black cockatoos in eastern Australia—their only habitat—is decreasing. The bird, which eats only the seeds of the casuarina tree and nests in the hollows of old eucalypts, has had its habitat devastated by land clearing. It is hoped that a programme of tree-planting and education will halt the decline of the cockatoo. See Action Box item 5.



The Gardens of Stone, an important and fragile part of the Blue Mountains now protected by a new National Park announced by the New South Wales Government last December. Andrew Cox

Walrus Tri-Star

Backpacker Magazine's "Top Tent"

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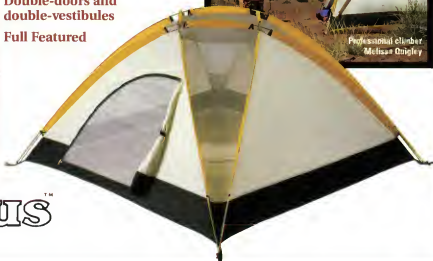
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Pipe dream?

There is a growing likelihood that BHP will choose the controversial East Gippsland route for its proposed Victoria-New South Wales gas pipeline. Of the five alternative routes for the pipeline, only the East Gippsland path has been subject to an environmental impact study. This is widely interpreted as an indication that this route is the company's preferred option. Should this alternative be chosen for the pipeline, construction would involve clearing a swath of bush 20 metres wide through parts of the pristine forests of south-eastern Australia, raising fears of the introduction of weeds and feral animals to these delicate ecosystems.

Marine mess

The health of Australia's coastal regions is deteriorating according to a report prepared under the auspices of the Federal Government. The report, entitled *State of the Marine Environment—Report for Australia*, claims that litter, habitat destruction and the lack of co-ordinated planning are threatening further to degrade estuaries, beaches and other marine environments. Only three months after the report was released in February the Victorian Government was being criticised for failing to consult Aboriginal groups in its drafting of a new coastal management strategy. This despite strong evidence that Aboriginal involvement markedly increases the efficiency of the responsible exploitation of coastal resources and threats that parts of Victoria's coastline could be subject to Mabo-style ownership claims.

Caring stand

Federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy Bob Collins has joined Landcare Australia in calling on business to support the Landcare Foundation, a fund established to help in the battle against land and water degradation. Landcare Australia claims that the continuing deterioration of the country's environment is costing \$500 million every year in lost production, with up to \$42 billion being lost through additional remedial work, research, pollution effects and nutrient losses.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Hung up

The saga of slow environmental degradation resulting from the installation of mobile phone towers in every corner of the country is continuing. Telecommunications company Vodafone is seeking permission to install eight towers in the Blue Mountains; some are likely to be in locations that will make them a significant eyesore in an area at present the subject of a campaign for its World Heritage listing. The construction of such towers is not restricted by any environmental regulations. The industry proudly claims that mountain-top towers would be painted green to reduce their visual impact.

More fertiliser

NSW conservationists are taking legal action to force the completion of an environmental impact statement before approval is given for the construction of a huge fertiliser manufacturing plant in an enclave of the Wollemi

National Park north-west of Sydney. Premier Bob Carr has promised to upgrade this National Park, in which the extraordinary living fossil Wollemi pine was recently discovered (see Wild Information, *Wild* no 56), to a Wilderness Area. The factory is to be sited outside the National Park but within its catchment area, which raises questions regarding water quality. The legal action, at present scheduled to proceed in late June, is being sponsored by the Tinda Creek Progress Association. See Action Box item 6.

VICTORIA

Potoroo find

The Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, which is busily facilitating logging of the habitat of the endangered long-footed potoroo throughout East Gippsland, has stumbled on evidence of the marsupial in the forests of north-eastern Victoria for the first time. A DCNR officer found the carcass of an unidentified marsupial on one of the increasing number of roads in the Alpine National Park (see Editorial). It was later identified as that of a long-footed potoroo, an animal previously thought to be confined (in shrinking numbers) to the forests of far East Gippsland and south-eastern New South Wales. An issue of the *DCNR*

News reports that the officer had been supervising a 'one-off' logging operation in the Alpine National Park and that timber workers later reported that they had sighted unfamiliar small marsupials while logging the area. (Apparently none of the logging contractors thought to question whether logging should be halted pending an investigation of the unusual sightings.) The DCNR now intends to postpone both logging operations and a planned fuel reduction burn in the area while 'specialists from across [the

Action Box

Readers can take action on the following matters covered in Green Pages in this issue.

1 For more information, contact the National Wetlands Program, Australian Nature Conservation Agency, GPO Box 636, Canberra, ACT 2601. Phone: (06) 250 0385; fax: (06) 250 0384.

2 For more information about the campaign to have the Australian Alps listed as a World Heritage site, call Doug Humann of the VNPA on (03) 650 8296, or write to him at 10 Parliament Pl, East Melbourne, Vic 3002.

3 To help with the campaign to end native forest wood-chipping, contact the Wilderness Society in your capital city.

4 Donations may be sent to the VNPA, 10 Parliament Pl, East Melbourne, Vic 3002. Cheques should be made payable to 'VNPA—Wild Forests' and donors should specify whether they wish to be anonymous.

5 Ellen McCulloch of the Bird Observers Club of Australia can be contacted on (03) 877 5342.

6 For more information, contact Tom McLoughlin at the Wilderness Society on (02) 267 7929; fax: (02) 264 2673.

7 For information or bookings, telephone (051) 54 0145.

8 Alan Kerr of the Mt Stirling Development Task Force can be contacted on (057) 75 2994.

9 For more information, contact Kate Booth on (002) 34 9366.



Track works are well advanced in Tasmania's Western Arthurs. John Chapman

department work] to secure the new discovery....'

One wonders about the fate of the animals had the single carcass not been found. DCNR 'publicity' frequently claims that its operations are consistently subject to *prior* scientific study and approval. How does this tally with the newsletter's statement that: 'Initial field surveys carried out since the discovery have provided further confirmation of the potoroos' presence...[and] have identified a high density of diggings associated with the potoroos' search for food.' [Wild's italics.] It would appear that even a perfunctory scientific peek at the area would have found signs of the rare animals before their habitat could be logged and burned. The department's North East Parks and Reserves manager is quoted as saying: '[This find] really demands that we give substantial extra attention to protection and management.' The find provides yet more evidence that the DCNR is allowing the destruction of wilderness around the State without

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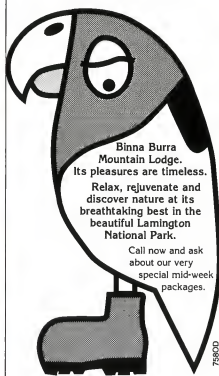
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knowledge of what is being bulldozed and logged.

This apparent inability to undertake a thorough scientific study of an area in which major disruption is planned follows reports that the DCNR is to sell off its forestry research arm 'Special Silvicultural Practices' to private enterprise. The well-respected newsletter of the Concerned Residents of East Gippsland expresses fears that the progressive privatisation of the department's environmental research may result in undesirable commercial pressures associated with winning a contract to undertake research for the department and influence environmental findings and data.

An item in another issue of the DCNR *Notes* might explain why the potoroos discovery did not receive a great deal of publicity. The newsletter reports that a number of forestry operators were banned from working in the bush following breaches of the Timber Harvesting Regulations and the Victorian Forest Code of Practice while involved in the same logging operation that led to the discovery of the potoroos. Tracks were built and trees taken outside the designated logging area, within the Alpine National Park or adjacent State Forest. The penalties meted out for these serious breaches of environmental codes ranged from a one-week ban to the imposition of a few demerit points.

Forest tours

Jill Redwood, one of the staunchest campaigners for the forests of East Gippsland (see Editorial, *Wild* no 56), is running a series of tours to show people what the fuss is all about. Held on the first weekend of every month, the forest tours take in both the beauty of pristine old growth and rain forest and the destruction of recently logged coupes and 'regeneration' forest. See Action Box item 7.

Alpine switch

Conservation groups welcomed the decision by the State Government not to renew the terms of the five alpine resort commissioners in the wake of controversy over the management of parts of Victoria's high country. The commissioners, who were seen as favouring increased development at alpine resorts at the expense of environmental concerns, were sacked at the end of March. Recent criticism of the ARC has centred on proposals to develop the relatively untouched Mt Stirling as a downhill ski resort and hand over much of the day-to-day running of Mt Buller to the Grollo group's Mt Buller Ski Lift Company (see Green Pages, *Wild* no 55). A report on the commission released in September last year was highly critical of its performance.

While the commissioners had won few supporters in the environment movement, the VNPA remains sceptical about their removal being sufficient to change the outlook of the troubled ARC. One of the sacked commissioners claimed that the proposal to

develop Mt Stirling had been presented by the Minister for Natural Resources without consultation with the commission. Documents obtained under Freedom of Information legislation suggested that a senior ARC officer had been briefing the minister on lease negotiations regarding Mt Buller and Mt Stirling while issuing denials to the media that any such negotiations were in progress. When confronted with his contradictory statements on the matter, the officer claimed that he had not been involved in negotiations, merely 'discussions'. This, together with repeated refusals by the government to release details of submissions to the public



Heroic East Gippsland conservationist Jill Redwood is now leading information tours in the region. *Chris Baxter*

enquiry into the ARC, suggests that more will need to be done to clean up the management of Victoria's alpine resorts than the ceremonial dismissal of the commissioners.

Meanwhile, consultants charged with the task of helping to prepare an environmental effects statement for Mt Stirling have reportedly identified five options for the future of the mountain. These include the maintenance of current 'zero-infrastructure' uses and a programme to remedy present environmental impacts at one end of the scale and, at the other, the development of a 'comprehensive ski resort' with village and lifts. A preview of what Mt Stirling may become in the event that full development proceeds is contained in documents obtained under FoI legislation. A 'draft capital programme for Mt Buller/Mt Stirling'

describes nine lifts including the Mt Buller-Mt Stirling gondola cable-car and an access lift from Telephone Box Junction to the Cricket Pitch. Other features of the proposal include 121 hectares of slope development of which 31 would be a snow-making area supplied by a 10 megalitre dam on Baldy Creek at River Spur; and a number of new (sealed) roads.

Several other documents confirm suspicions that the whole project is dependent upon real estate development on the mountain, which seem to be supported by the then Chief Executive Officer of the ARC (now an employee of the prospective developer, Buller Stirling Pty Ltd—another Grollo company) at a meeting early in 1994 where he is reported to have said that 'it would not be possible to pay for the cost of the cable-car through the sale of lift tickets and there would have to be some sort of offset through real estate'. At about the same time, the documents reveal, the then CEO suggested to the Mt Buller Committee of Management that the proposed development at Mt Stirling 'may not be tendered'. It is not hard to work out who would get the contract and this raises fears that one commercial organisation may control both Mt Buller and a fully developed Mt Stirling. See Action Box item 8.

Road to ruin

Plans are afoot to construct a road below the snow-line from Dargo on the high plains of central Gippsland to Wonnangatta Station in the very heart of East Gippsland's mountains. Initial publicity supporting the road, the proposal for which is being pushed by a local organisation calling itself the Pioneer Group, claims that its construction would open the floodgates to tourism and open up Gippsland to the world. That there will be little to distinguish Gippsland from every other overdeveloped, 'managed to death' piece of ex-wilderness when the world arrives does not seem to have been considered.

TASMANIA

Tarkine threats

After a long campaign to halt the building of a road through the Tarkine wilderness area of north-western Tasmania—which included the jailing of green campaigner Bob Brown—the Wilderness Society has expressed fears that a new wood-chip mill in the region has set its sights on the area's timber. The society estimates that the mill at Hampshire will require up to 700 000 tonnes of additional wood-chips to be taken from the State's forests and that the mill's owner, North Broken Hill, will soon request permission to enter areas conservationists insist be added to the World Heritage List. See Action Box item 9.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Radioactive deal

The Wilderness Society claims to have obtained a leaked letter from South Austral-



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ian Premier Dean Brown to Prime Minister Paul Keating in which he proposes that World Heritage listing of the Lake Eyre basin be scrapped in return for South Australia's acceptance of a radioactive waste repository at Woomera. The letter, dated 28 February 1995, is described by the society as 'breath-takingly cynical' and 'environmentally irresponsible'.

OVERSEAS

Throwing stones

Australia's 'green' reputation among the world community was dealt a serious blow at the world greenhouse summit in Berlin in March. Despite a last-minute back-flip later claimed to be part of a successful brokering of a 'tough' agreement on greenhouse gas emissions, the Australian delegation was widely regarded as leading the developed world's push to prevent the conference from agreeing to major reductions in the output of those gases responsible for global warming. Australia, with much of the developed world including all the oil-producing nations, refused to agree to binding targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The farce came hot on the heels of the admission by the Federal Government that Australia would not come anywhere near meeting the reduction targets set at the international conference in Rio two years ago. Our Pacific neighbours, who are under direct threat from rising sea-levels, expressed anger at having been abandoned by Australia.

The failure of the conference to reach a binding agreement follows increasing evidence that the greenhouse effect is beginning to alter the world's climate. Parts of the Antarctic ice-sheet are reported to be breaking up for the first time in thousands of years while insurers around the world have announced that the threat of greenhouse-induced natural disasters is forcing them to reassess insurance premiums for storm damage and other climate-related catastrophes such as floods and drought. Australian insurers are preparing for an increase in cyclone activity on the east coast of the country, activity which is likely to stretch further south as the climate warms.

Bush bugarup

A number of environmental activists from Papua New Guinea toured Australia during late February and March to raise awareness of the need to protect the tropical rain forests of PNG. The tour, which was sponsored by local organisations such as Greenpeace and Community Aid Abroad, drew attention to the continuing widespread destruction of PNG's rain forests by the forestry and mining industries. Participants in the 'Big Bush Bugarup Tour' claimed that logging companies, many from Malaysia, are probing deep into PNG's pristine forests to negotiate deals with local tribes, the result of which may be that the latter will receive as little as \$7.00 a cubic metre for timber that sells for as much as \$800/m³ in Japan. ■

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send them to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



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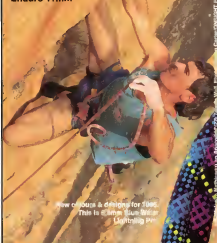


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REKING LIGHTLY

Reducing the impact of our overseas exploits, by *Stephen Bunton*

Long before the words minimal impact were coined I was introduced to the idea. I started many of my outdoor pursuits just as the 'burn, bash and bury' mentality was being knocked on the head. It therefore came as a shock to me when one of my fellow cavers threw an empty sardine tin over his shoulder and off into the bush during a lunch break on the track in the wilds of Papua New Guinea. When I commented about the unacceptability of this action, he simply replied, 'Well, that's what the locals do with their rubbish!' It was a case of 'when in Rome do as Rome does'. After a lengthy and illuminating discussion we agreed that in fact this was probably the best course of action; the tin would rust faster here than anywhere else, eventually leave no trace and thus never be seen again. It seemed to be a better option than concentrating all our rubbish in one dump—as we do in our own cities.

The most interesting point raised by the discussion was: to what extent should you 'do as Rome does' when travelling the world? Should you throw your rubbish into the bush or the street just because the locals do? Should you buy fast food wrapped in polystyrene and use lots of paper towels when you visit the USA? Should you give to the beggars in India? What constitutes acceptable behaviour when you travel abroad?

Even in Australia I'm loath to eat 'plastic' food even if the beef grazed in pastures that were nowhere near the Amazon. To me, the waste of resources inherent in the production of fast food is offensive. This is one of my values which I cannot discard even when I cross an international border. I take my set of values with me when I travel and it provides me with the best guide-lines to what is—and what is not—acceptable behaviour.

The conservation of resources and particularly of wilderness is unfortunately very much a middle-class, Western privilege. What right have we to dictate to other countries how to use their resources and wilderness areas? None; except that we know the survival of our planet depends upon it. (Some of us overlook the awkward fact that to take a plane to get there was an ecologically undesirable act in the first place.)

However, being Westerners sensitive to the values of other cultures doesn't mean that we can't preach a bit of minimal impact. The easiest way to do this is by setting a good example. I always throw my rubbish into a bin irrespective of what the locals do with theirs. If I can't find a bin, I carry my rubbish with me until I can dispose of it sensibly. If we consider that we have the right to go to these places, we are also charged with the



Planning his next wild adventure? *Stephen Jackson*

responsibility to act as ambassadors of minimal impact.

I felt very inadequate recently when in a country where I lacked the language skills to fulfil this role. I was horrified as the *Defensa Civil* arrived at our campsite and began to cut tassocks to use as bed matting under their tents, dig trenches round them and cut green wood in an alpine area for a fire which wouldn't burn anyway. It was a nightmare—a return to the burn, bash and bury days, which resulted in us attempting to dispose of the rubbish they left behind as well.

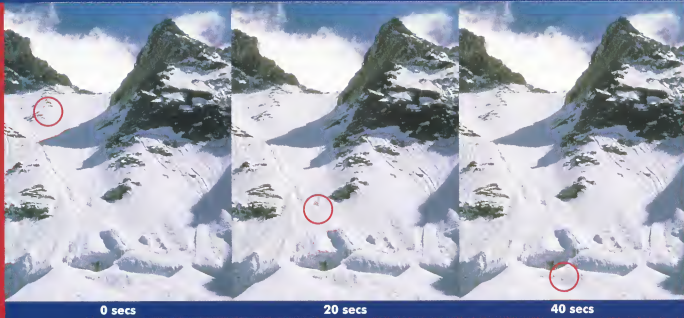
What does impress me about developing countries, however, is their lack of dependence upon hygienic, sterile, packaging. Often the paper used is cheap and biodegradable and spares them from many of the evils of litter accumulation. In some African countries people would be glad to have your discarded tin for use as a utensil. In these places what is

rubbish to you can be of high value to the locals and you would be very callous to throw it away.

One of the problems connected with overseas travel is the 'strength of numbers' effect. As more tourists go to a particular exotic locale, the place changes. Most travellers will at some time say how 'touristy' such and such place has become. Well, of course it's touristy—they were there, weren't they?

No one has outdone the USA in the impact on the culture of developing nations. US-style fast food outlets tend to spring up everywhere bringing with them their wastefulness in the name of hygiene. I don't patronise them even if they are a local franchise! Too often the USA is seen as synonymous with success and the desire of developing nations to emulate the USA concerns me as a tourist. When overseas I advertise the fact that I am an Australian (although our own appalling record of cultural sabotage in Bali is nothing to be proud of).

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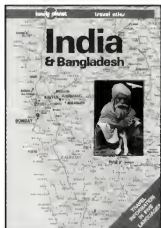
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Many tourists seem to be searching the world for that quintessential travel experience which sums up their preconceived notion of what the country should be like, or what it was like before the tourists came. It's even better if they can get a photo of it! Often such notions are conjured up in our minds from the photos which decorate the offices of travel agents. What the travel promoters don't tell you is that they pay photographers a lot of money to get these deceptively 'pristine' photos; they're not often taken by mugs like you and me.

There was an occasion when I had the opportunity to take photos of locals in Papua New Guinea dressed in their spectacular head-dresses but I refrained because they demanded money from me. I was an impoverished student at the time and 'couldn't really afford to pay' (or so I told myself) but deep down I objected to something that seemed like a rip-off. All they did for a living was stand around in fancy clothes and charge people to take their picture! Some of the Sathhus in India make a living in a similar way. Now, however, I accept that these people are quite justified in dressing up as mobile tourist attractions to earn an income if they wish and I support them realising that if I don't, the traditions they carry with them will probably die out.

I'm very conscious of offending people's dignity when travelling. Nowadays I ask them whether I may take their photos and if they demand money I either pay or politely decline depending on whether I really need the photo. I am also very aware that in some countries people will sell their dignity for money. The Asian prostitution industry is a good example of this. I remember being woken from my midnight slumber in Bangkok by a knock at the door.

'You want woman?'

'No, go away.'

'Perhaps boy?'

Your presence alone can be sufficient to change the nature of the place you're visiting. If, for example, you go to Nepal or Tibet to see those countries' Buddhist culture, you must respect their peoples' religious practices so that these countries will retain their integrity. This means saying 'Namaste' when you meet someone on the track and passing mani walls with them on your right. If you fail to do this and think that the custom is just religious bullshit, it won't be long before the locals feel the same way. Your attitudes will have changed the very aspect of the place that you wished to experience.

As tourists in a foreign land I feel that we have a duty to find out the local customs and abide by them. This may mean obeying dress codes, especially for women travelling in Moslem countries. It shouldn't matter what you think of Islam as a religion; if to you its attitudes to women are so reprehensible, why are you there in the first place? If you are there to subvert someone else's religion do not expect to be made welcome. I prefer to confine my subversion to a few environmental practices.

One way better to appreciate local customs and practices is to fit in as best you can when you travel. This doesn't mean going native, buying wacky clothes and starting to beg. I

like to catch local buses rather than new, modern, western minibuses although I realise that this denies local entrepreneurs a slice of their market. I'm also always a bit dubious about the ethics of western entrepreneurs operating in these countries. They do often run the nicest coffee shop; and, yes, they employ local staff; and if someone didn't teach the locals how to do things properly... Generally, while such places offer little oases away from the local madness, they are really making your destination just that much more like home.

When places change, so too do the ranges and types of souvenirs that are available. Quite often travellers reject souvenirs in local markets because they consider them too 'touristy'. This arrogant statement translates as: 'I would rather pillage something which was a genuine part of the cultural heritage of this nation than buy some cheap souvenir'. Give up! You're never going to get the genuine article. Indeed, in some countries your bags are searched when you leave to ensure that you didn't get the genuine article. I prefer to support a local artisan and thus hope to keep local crafts alive. I'm quite proud of the fact that I actively support someone in the tourist industry. I find that my souvenir has more personal value if I've bought it from the person who has made it. Now, to me, that is genuine.

The difficulty is that I never quite know what is right and what is wrong at any given time. It is also true that even at home I compromise my own values, so that this is probably even more likely to occur when I'm under stress travelling in an alien land. However, as far as a wilderness ethic is concerned I'm quite happy with minimal-impact bushwalking at home and have no trouble continuing to practise it while I'm away. But possibly the most overlooked aspect of minimal-impact travel is the size of your party.

Recently I was enjoying the prospect of a comfortable night in a not too crowded hut that supposedly slept 24, when I walked a party of 24 with their local climbing guides and attendant cooks and cook-boys. Perhaps they felt that they were doing the right thing engaging a local entrepreneur and employing local staff. But travelling in groups of 20 or more not only stresses the other hut users but the environment as well, especially since the local guides are usually not versed in minimal-impact philosophy (or in any form of hut etiquette). Unfortunately, I have experienced similar incidents in Australia, more often with large groups of bushwalkers and, most commonly, with outdoors clubs. We still have a lot to learn about minimal impact in our own country.

As for my general rule for overseas travel: I suppose that I try to do as Rome does knowing, however, that I still stick out like a sore thumb and will never really emulate the locals entirely. And in many ways I know that I shouldn't. The bottom line is that you should always try to behave correctly while travelling; better than the locals if need be. ■

Stephen Bunton (see Contributors in Wild no 6) is Wild's Contributing Editor for caving. An experienced walker and climber, he has visited many parts of Australia and several overseas countries to pursue these interests.

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RUNNING ON EMPTY

Quentin Chester squeezes every drop from life in the wilderness

It was getting dark and I knew I had a long, long way to go. The bush closed in. Rock outcrops above the creek cast smudging shadows across my path. I stumbled on, jostled by the undergrowth, branches snagging my pack. The air was stifling.

I was alone on a remote island off the coast of the Kimberleys. My rendezvous with the boat was still three days away. It had been four hours since my last drink and my mouth was as dry as dust. If I didn't find water soon, I was going to finish up as part of the local food-chain. This prospect seemed to excite a clutch of crows calling out obscenities from the tree-tops.

The day had started very differently. After a night camped on a rock shelf, I had skirted round a basin formed by the confluence of three creeks. Humid breezes drifted inland off the sea. The paperbark forest resounded with animal cries and rustling noises. Water trickled down the creeks.

I had dawdled in the forest and basked by rock-pools before heading across the heart of the island. The high ground was exposed sandstone with relic outcrops—some the size of houses—standing tall above the straggly spinifex and acacia scrub. To be alone and on the loose again in such a place after a week cooped up on the boat had made me light-headed.

Adding to my glee had been the notion that I was probably the first person to walk this ground since the Wororra people inhabited the island a century or so before. I had been spurred on by the discovery of rock shelters decorated with ochre paintings. The silt floors of these shelters were embedded with debris left by earlier occupants: shells, small bones and fire-charred stones. One fateful discovery had led to another. I had walked towards the creeks which drained south from the plateau.

At my lunch stop I noted that there were a few mouthfuls of water left in a drink-bottle and some more in a wine-cask. The creeks I was aiming for would be certain to hold water. According to the map, they were major watercourses at least as large as those I had crossed in the morning. And so, with no dissenting voices, I pressed on.

Veering across a series of small, rocky ravines, I threaded through tangled scrub and fallen timber. The afternoon sun struck hard,



A thirsty fellow going in, boots and all? Bruce Connor

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lathering me in sweat. After an hour of torrid going I slumped into the shade of a boulder and drained my drink-bottle in greedy gulps. I was now a long way from a reliable water-supply but my confidence was still sky-high. The intrigue of what lay beyond seemed all-powerful; somehow my better judgement had vapourised in the thrumming heat.

Another hour of scrub and scrambles brought me to a saddle. The valley below dropped away through tall timber to the coast. My throat felt hot and singed. Blood oozed from a grazed knee. I burrowed into my pack to get the wine-skin. The contents of my pack felt damp. When I yanked the silver envelope free it was horribly light. Somehow the tap had worked open and what water remained had dripped into the dust. There was nothing left to ration so I sucked the remaining droplets of moisture from the cask until it became a crushed ball of foil.

At this point the only sensible option was to retreat. But I was convinced that the creek below would have cascading terraces and ferny glades. The cool shade of the woodland and the turquoise waters offshore lured me on.

The valley's upper reaches were dry and leaves cracked underfoot. It was only a matter of time, I thought, before deep pools would appear. But a succession of rock holes held only sand, indented with gouge marks from animals scrounging for moisture. I tried digging deeper into the silt but it was powdery dry down to bedrock. Checking the map, I saw that the creek was joined by a major tributary close to the coast. I clung to this shred of hope and continued, my throat parched.

Finally I reached an outcrop overlooking the creek junction. Not far away the shoreline was obscured by clusters of pandanus and mangroves. I looked down from the outcrop and spied two shimmering pools of water hemmed in against the rock by banks of river-sand. I tossed off my pack and skidded down a gravel slope. With cupped hands I scooped the cool, dark water into my mouth. But as the longed-for elixir hit my tongue I gagged. It was liquid salt—my oasis was a tidal soak.

In outrage I kicked the sandbank, casting fans of gravel and dust into the water. Back at my pack I slumped in the spiky grass and considered my dwindling options: whether to make camp and try to rest for the night or go up the tributary. I doubted that I could endure a long night without relief. Venturing up the tributary seemed a hopeless cause. There was no alternative but to back-track.

It took me a long time to get mobile. I felt weak and bewildered. I repacked my rucksack, abusing the empty water-containers. I had food but no appetite. I tried sucking on a barley sugar, but it just adhered to my tongue so I spat it into the grass. The light was already going as I shuffled up the creek.

Back at the saddle I propped myself against a big eucalypt, my lungs straining. I had stopped sweating and felt a dull ache in my head. Ahead there was a dense stand of tea-tree. I stumbled on; at least it was downhill. Half-way through the thicket I started to panic. Feeling trapped and frustrated I crashed, cursing, into the crowding limbs, showering myself with leaves and shards of bark. My head boiled with dumb anger.

I burst into a grassy clearing and dropped my pack to the ground. For ten minutes, probably more, I cowered there, elbows on knees, the butt of my palms pressed into my eye-sockets. I took slow, deep breaths keeping my mouth closed, lips clenched over gibbering gums. Images of family, boats and friends glimmered in my head. My most fervid imaginings were not of ice-crusts stubbies but of the creek I had left that morning, the clear, flowing ponds and the limitless litres of sweet-tasting water.

My thoughts alternated between these visions and bouts of anxiety about my dehydrated state. I fretted about the possible effects of heat-stroke and whether I'd been having deliriums. I wondered about complications. Had I cooked my cortex, or inflicted permanent damage on my renal system? I felt feeble and very small.

There had been other times when I had been ravaged by thirst. I remembered arriving at the top of the gorge at Mt Buffalo after a midsummer's day of torment on the climb Where Angels Fear to Tread. Our water had run out in the morning and we fried for hours on the baking granite. There were bushwalks, too, when water had been scarce and we had to make do with putrid puddles where normally there were bounteous water-holes. On one trip to Freeling Heights in the far north of the Flinders Ranges, where we dug deep into moist creek sand to extract a few cupfuls of briny liquid, the carcass of a dead goat had lain nearby.

But this day my predicament was much worse; as though I were in the grip of some narcissis. Even after a long rest there was no relief. I rummaged in my pack and found, of all things, a tin of herring fillets in a creamy wine sauce. With my knife I punctured a hole in the lid and sucked. The viscous mixture clung to the roof of my mouth. Too salty to swallow, at least it softened the palate. I started walking, slowly at first. There was now something deliberate in my actions. I picked up momentum after a while, anxious to exploit what daylight remained.

This new-found determination did not, however, ease my ferocious thirst. As I cut across the scrub-filled gullies, aberrant thoughts took hold. I was much too strung out to consider those solutions described in survival manuals, like collecting condensation in fly-sheets or putting plastic bags over bushes. Instead, from the darker cubicles of my memory I dredged up the fact that, at one stage of the Great Divide Walk, Barry Higgins had become so desperate for fluids that he drank his own urine.

As I walked I mused over this fact for a good half hour, wondering whether it would be as bad as it seemed. If it was good enough for Barry and Indian Prime Ministers, perhaps I should put it to the test. So at a rest stop I took out my Lexas cup and placed it on a suitably elevated rock. I stood there for a while before my bladder obliged. Another minute or two 'passed' before I found the courage to pick up the cup of warm, syrupy liquid. But, even before the cup had reached my chin, the smell made me dry retch and I tossed the repellent brew into the bush, concluding that Mr Higgins was a very brave man indeed.

As the light dwindled, my pace quickened. Somehow I found the energy and resolve to keep going. I was a pretty reckless figure as I blundered through the undergrowth, watched over by crows that hung above like executioners' hoods. Crossing one outcrop I recognised the distant silhouette of a shelter I had visited in the morning. I was barely half-way home but at least I had a familiar landmark, a beacon to follow. I lurched forward into the gloom, chasing the vague outlines, my legs clattering into branches.

Then, suddenly, I emerged from the bush on to a succession of stone ramps and terraces. There was something different in the air, a kind of humid, peaty smell. It was now almost dark, stars were appearing on the horizon. I squatted on my haunches and sank my fingers into the fine-grained silt underfoot. It was warm and damp. I leapt up and chased the fall line of the terraces.

A thin film of moisture smeared the stone aprons between the beds of sand. I knelt down and kissed the rock, letting the moisture tantalise my lips. I circled round the benches of rock until I found where the trickles gathered in a deep, bath-sized depression in the stone. I shouted to the night, flung off my pack and buried my face deep in the pool of black water drawing enormous gulps of it into my mouth.

For the next hour I lay by the pool and drank. I pondered on what might have happened if I hadn't stumbled upon this unexpected source; how much more my sagging bulk of skin and bone could have endured. Certainly no avalanche or rockfall, nor any blizzard, lightning strike or river-crossing had rubbed my nose in my own mortality quite like this chastening afternoon when my impetuosity got the better of me.

In a fit of rejoicing I up-ended my rucksack and let its entire contents tumble across the rock. A few minutes later I sat surrounded by bottles, cups, Tranga billies and two wine-skins—all brimming. I felt like the richest man alive. Yet, despite this extravagance and constant guzzling, no amount of water seemed to slake my thirst. I drank until my bloated stomach ached and still my mouth felt shrivelled and dry.

And yet my joy was unassailable. I lay back on the warm stone slabs staring up into the dome of the evening sky as it came alive with constellations. The white points of stars appeared to oscillate with uncanny brilliance. Off in the stillness of the night there were sounds of creatures settling in the forest. After so many hours desperate to be rid of this infernal isle, I now had no desire to be anywhere else. There was water. And the other things that really mattered to me were razor-sharp in my mind—my cup runneth over. ■

Quentin Chester

Quentin Chester (see Contributors in *Wild* no 3) is a freelance writer who specialises in outdoor topics. After living for some years in exile on the Hawkesbury River, New South Wales, dreaming of the Flinders Ranges, he has since returned to his native Adelaide. He is the author of *The Kimberley-Horizons of Stone*, reviewed in *Wild* no 48.

Tasmania's ELUSIVE PEAKS

Five of the Apple Isle's trickiest ticks,
by Stephen Down



elusive (l'ʌsɪv) vb. (tr.) 1. difficult to catch. 2. preferring or living in solitude and anonymity. 3. difficult to remember. 4. avoiding the issue: an elusive answer.

Collins Paperback English Dictionary

Many mountain peaks are said to be elusive. You often hear bushwalkers talking about how hard it was to get to the summit of some peak or other. The weather was terrible. The track was bottomless mud. The guidebook recommended some fanciful time to which only a marathon runner could keep on a bitumen road! Do these things make a peak elusive?

Tasmania is full of remote and rugged mountains which draw both local and mainland walkers to experience their beauty. Over the past 100 or more years Tasmanian peaks have gained a reputation as some of Australia's most difficult to bag. Federation Peak, the most famous of them all, is considered a major objective for bushwalkers from eastern States and some may have to return year after year before bagging the precipitous summit.

But is Federation Peak *still* particularly elusive? Forty years ago there would have been no objections

The bulk of Frenchmans Cap may dominate but Clytemnestra, left, is the elusive peak in this region. Stephen Down. **Right**, similarly, Mt Geryon's South Peak, left, is lower than the North Peak but its more precipitous nature and greater technical difficulty make it a more elusive summit. Grant Dixon

to this statement. It was certainly difficult to climb. When the first expeditions ventured into the Southwest wilderness Federation Peak was extremely remote, there were no good tracks to its summit, roads were not as close as they are today and guidebooks were more or less non-existent. Well into the 1960s bushwalking clubs and word of mouth were the more common sources for learning how to get to this peak. You had to do all the hard work yourself—navigate the best route and plan the best campsites and food drops. Only after you had achieved all that could you attempt the final climb to the summit.

In the 1990s, however, Federation Peak can no longer be considered an elusive mountain. Desirable? Certainly. But like other desirable peaks in Tasmania such as Frenchmans Cap, Mt Anne and Mt Ossa, it is now not very difficult to reach. There are good tracks to the summits of all these once

elusive, albeit still highly desirable, peaks.

Following a well-trodden, muddy track can be difficult but it is definitely much easier than having to find a route through three metre tall, impenetrable baueria and tea-tree on a flat plain (unless of course you are three-and-a-half metres tall!). These 'desirables' have good track notes on how to negotiate their impressive flanks. As long as you can use a map and a compass, and follow a track, the key to climbing a desirable peak has been nipped out for you by someone else's hard work. So, what features make a mountain peak not just desirable but elusive?

Bad weather can certainly make a peak 'difficult to catch'; more so if you must leave a warm, dry sleeping-bag to do so. Some might say that Tasmania's fickle weather indeed makes all its peaks elusive. However, we can rule out the weather as a major reason for a particular peak gaining a reputation as elusive because this can affect summit bids everywhere. Failing to reach the summit of Mt Wellington above Hobart because of a sudden snowstorm in April would not classify Mt Wellington as an elusive summit, especially if you were driving. To be turned back from climbing Federation Peak by a blizzard on the Eastern Arthurs also is nothing out of the ordinary yet most people consider Federation Peak to be far more elusive than Mt Wellington.

Remoteness from the trappings of human beings—tracks, roads, huts, airports, very fast trains or sky rails—is the most obvious reason. But remoteness is not the only reason why a peak is not often climbed. Peaks overshadowed by a famous neighbour are often ignored. If a peak does not have a route already blazed through difficult scrub or cliffs most people will prefer the easier option of finding one that does.

In Australia, the height of a peak is not a cause of elusiveness. Indeed, the highest peaks of a range are usually



WILD BUSHWALKING

the ones that *are* climbed while a nearby, lower, neighbour may be overlooked. Lastly, peaks which do not have published track notes are much more likely to remain elusive.

MT NOROLD

One of the best examples of a remote peak in South-west Tasmania is Mt Norold. At 978 metres, it is the highest point of a range still unspoiled by the often eroded walking tracks of its bigger neighbours. The Norolds, however, have many of the features which most people would associate with a Tasmanian mountain: evidence of glaciation, waterfalls, rain forest and amazing views. As the crow flies the nearest well-defined track is about 11 kilometres to the north, in the Western Arthur Range. The Port Davey Track is beyond the ranges to the west and Bathurst Harbour and the South West Track are many kilometres to the south. The mountain

disappeared. The only ones that remain close to their original form are the tracks which bushwalkers use today—the Port Davey Track and the South Coast Track.

The first European to walk through this area was George Robinson in 1830 and he had no intention of building tracks. While based at Port Davey, Robinson made an excursion north from Bathurst Harbour to determine whether any Aboriginal tribes were living in the region. He passed the Norolds and may have climbed Mt Norold to get a better view north. He then continued on through the rugged terrain to the westernmost edge of the Western Arthurs. His account of this trip—found in his collected papers published by the Tasmanian Historical Research Association and called *Friendly Mission*—is a useful guide to the type of terrain you can still expect to find today.

Later, in 1879, TB Moore built a track east from Port Davey hoping eventually to find a quicker way to the

larger, more spectacular peak is demonstrated by the 1280 metre high Clytemnestra near the better known Frenchmans Cap. It is recorded that A Davern and party named it after the character from Greek mythology during a visit to the area in 1933, but little further light can be shed on its past.

It is not surprising that the history books do not dwell on this mass of rock when it is overshadowed by what to my mind is the most spectacular cliff in Australia. Frenchmans Cap itself was once an elusive mountain. Although 'the Cap' was climbed much earlier than Federation Peak, for a long time it was still a major undertaking. It is not certain when Frenchmans Cap was first climbed. However, the summit did receive a very small number of visitors before it was 'rediscovered' by Fred Smithies in 1931. Whether drawn by mineral prospecting or bushwalking, 'the Cap' was the principal reason for people venturing into this storm-lashed area.

Frenchmans Cap is still the main attraction that brings people to this part of the world. Climbers to attempt the 350 metre vertical face; BASE jumpers to throw themselves off the 350 metre cliff; bushwalkers to teeter nervously on the edge of the 350 metre drop. But not much is heard about the peaks surrounding this major icon.

As you walk through this area, peaks seem to rise upward in every direction. On the ridge that runs south from 'the Cap', Clytemnestra is one of these while Philips Peak and Sharlands Peak tower above Barron Pass. As the two latter peaks are next to the track they can be considered less elusive than Clytemnestra which normally requires a full extra day to reach and climb.

Passing 'the Cap' is not as easy as one might think. Travelling from one of its sides to the next can lead you through a large number of cliffs. The South Col, on the opposite side of the track to Frenchmans Cap's summit, must be reached before Clytemnestra can be scaled. There are numerous ways of doing this, either by passing below the huge face of the Cap from the East Col, over the summit of Frenchmans' or traversing the mazes of the northern faces.

The difficulty of finding safe routes through the numerous cliffs, as well as the fact that Frenchmans Cap is the more desirable peak to climb, result in Clytemnestra remaining elusive.



This photographer on Federation Peak seems to have overlooked elusive Mt Hopetoun (in the middle ground, in front of Mt Picton). Right, the exposed scramble to Mt Geryon's South Peak is only for the suitably experienced. Down

certainly lives 'in solitude and anonymity'.

While the reason for naming Mt Norold is not documented by the Nomenclature Board of Tasmania, a reasonable suggestion found in the Australian Conservation Foundation's *South West Book*, by Helen Gee and Janet Fenton, alludes to Mt Norold's position between the North and Old Rivers. Due to this range's location few people have had the luxury of visiting it. However, during the 1800s and at the turn of the century, Mt Norold was often passed by track cutters in their attempts to open up the South-west. After almost a century of disuse, these routes have all but

Huon for piners, miners and shipwrecked sailors. Due to the tough terrain his attempt eventually ended past the Norolds near the Eastern Arthurs. In 1902, after several attempts, he extended the track all the way to Hastings.

Famous Tasmanian bushwalking pioneer Olegas Truchanas passed near to the Norolds when on the way to becoming the first person to climb Federation Peak from the south in 1954. As on many occasions before and since, Mt Norold was overlooked by someone with his sights set on other goals or other peaks. Along with its fierce defences of scrub, this is a major reason why it remains elusive today.

CLYTEMNESTRA

The idea that a peak can remain 'forgotten' due to its proximity to a

MT GERON SOUTH

Difficult terrain is a feature of Mt Geryon's South Peak in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. For the bushwalker, this is an

elusive peak. For the rockclimber, it is part of the very desirable Skyline Traverse. A huge number of walkers pass below this peak, which is named after the three-headed beast in Greek mythology. Glaciation over the millennia has produced Mt Geryon's towering cliffs which fall into Pine Valley on the west and into the valley which contains the Narcissus River to the east.

The North Peak of Mt Geryon was first climbed in 1937 by a Hobart Walking Club group and is frequently the object of bushwalks to its 1509 metre summit. The approach to it is straightforward and the final climb is a rock scramble above some impressive drops, but it is still a difficult climb and only for experienced walkers who are not uncomfortable with heights. At 1506 metres the South Peak is a different story. It was first climbed—long after Federation Peak—by a Launceston Walking Club group in the early 1960s. The ascent involves a long scramble up from Pine Valley with the final climb up the east-west skyline requiring rock-climbing skills and safety belays for most aspirants.

With the huge number of choices in this area—the Acropolis, the mountains of the Labyrinth and the remaining Du Cane Range—most walkers are content to view the much-photographed Mt Geryon from another nearby summit. All the mountains surrounding Mt Geryon are either straightforward to climb or have a well-defined track to their summit. Only a few bushwalkers will attempt an untracked and awkward peak like Mt Geryon's South Peak. Not everyone has the fondness for heights and the skills necessary to reach the top of such an elusive block of rock.

MT HOPETOUN

All who have been there know that the views from the summit of Federation Peak are guaranteed to keep you enthralled. The Arthurs, Mt Anne, Mt Picton—and, on those special days, the towers of Mt Wellington—will capture your attention. Later your eyes will take in the smaller, less pronounced peaks. How often have you wondered what it would be like to travel over an obscure ridge or peak that you know few people have visited before? It is easy to see why the rugged little peak of Mt Hopetoun is disregarded by most walkers for the same reasons that apply to Clytemnestra. Mt Picton, Mt Bobs and of course Federation Peak and the Eastern Arthurs all overshadow this 1087 metre high summit. Due to its geography Mt Hopetoun will continue to be one of those places often glimpsed, sometimes wondered about, but rarely visited.

The peaks of the Eastern Arthur range can be climbed from the Federation track without huge losses and gains in altitude. Mt Hopetoun, however, is separated

from the Arthur Range by the Cracroft River and Hopetoun Creek while the Cracroft River continues round to provide a barrier to the Picton Range. There are no short, easy ascents to the summit. Having climbed Federation Peak most walkers do not want more hardship and depredation but a hot shower and some real food.

In 1901 TB Moore named the peak after the first Governor-General of Australia, the Earl of Hopetoun, as he continued his track past Mt Norold through to Hastings, although it is still a hotbed of discussion among some whether or not he was looking at Mt Hopetoun when he named it. Later Mt Hopetoun was used as a close vantage-point for viewing possible routes to Federation Peak before the latter was climbed. However, once Federation was climbed Mt Hopetoun's importance diminished and the routes once used to reach the top are now all but forgotten.

The saddle between Goon Moor and Mt Hopetoun's descending main ridge is the highest pass between Hopetoun and its surrounding ranges and was one of the early, rugged routes on to the Eastern Arthurs. The other routes to this elusive summit start at Pass Creek near Luckmans Lead or from the Cracroft River below the eastern flanks of the mountain.

REMOTE PEAK

The peaks mentioned so far have all been of differing heights, shapes and sizes. As noted above, height is no yardstick for elusiveness in Australia. This is understandable as we have no giant glaciated peaks that cause you to reach for an oxygen bottle!

The small Remote Peak (960 metres) is also elusive although while climbing its slopes to reach the summit you don't have to cling to cliffs. Situated on the edge of the Frankland Range in the Companion Range, Remote Peak is an example of an elusive peak near which many have walked. The Arthur, Frankland and Denison Ranges all have routes through their length which are popular with walkers. But how many of their peaks are regularly climbed? Those that are tend to be the highest as they are usually the most spectacular. The peaks which happen to be just off the normal route are not often tackled. Only a fortunate few are able to stay longer in these magnificent places (and have the weather!) to bag the remaining peaks.

As seen from the Frankland Range, the rocky skyline of Remote Peak seems to be quite alone and this apparent remoteness

provides the most likely explanation for the naming of this peak. In fact, this remoteness is an illusion. There are numerous ranges from there to the west coast. The Frankland Range is the obvious place from which to climb Remote Peak, but it is not the only one. The White Monolith Range, Folded Range or Mt Giblin provide different approaches from the south while numerous valleys to the north hold similar problems of route finding and difficult terrain for the experienced walker to solve.

The very things that made the now famous Tasmanian peaks elusive in the past are still evident in their lesser-known



neighbours and in some of bushwalking's forgotten areas. It is this elusiveness which helps to make Tasmania unique. The peaks described above all have one or more of the hallmarks of elusiveness. Remoteness; difficulty of terrain; closeness to more famous peaks; and lack of track or route guidance.

By finding our own routes to these unique places, it is less likely that major tracks will be created. By restricting tracks and guidebooks to the very popular areas we will help to maintain many of Tasmania's peaks as they are now—wild, challenging and elusive.

Stephen Down has 15 years' experience of walking in Tasmania. He moved to Melbourne after graduating from Hobart University, discovered the delights of cross-country downhill skiing and has been hooked ever since. He is a member of the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs Search and Rescue section.

IS TECHNOLOGY TAKING OVER?

Quentin Chester takes a look at our obsession with gear, past, present and future

At first glance Nick seems ordinary enough. Married, with a couple of young kids and a ten-year-old station wagon, he resides in a 'renovator's dream' in the suburbs and has a corroding letter-box that collects its share of final notices. But a closer look reveals another, much darker, side to Nick's life.

The garage, where the car might otherwise be housed, is choked with outdoor paraphernalia. Assorted skis, climbing gear, tents and a pair of mountain bikes all compete for space with a rucksack collection that breaks into double figures if you include day packs. Inside the house outdoor magazines and equipment catalogues are stacked in corners like sedimentary strata. The linen press billows with sleeping-bags for every season. Fleece tops and a dozen 'state-of-the-art' rain jackets are jammed into the wardrobe while under the bed is a collection of outdoor footwear that would do Imelda Marcos proud.

Nick (not his real name) is afflicted with a debilitating condition that until recently threatened his marriage and mental well-being, not to mention his credit rating. Nick is a techaholic. Obsessed with miracle fabrics, bar-tacks and denier counts, he couldn't resist an advertisement that included any of the words 'revolutionary', 'innovative', 'performance', 'system', 'technical' or 'break-through'.

What began as a curiosity about gadgetry while preparing for university mountain-club trips developed into a

spiral of serious equipment addiction. Part-time work with a local outdoor shop led Nick to become a willing captive of the equipment industry, enslaved in various retail and marketing roles. His meagre earnings were squandered on a growing armoury of gear and knick-knacks. With the passing years the means became the ends. Time off from work was spent not in the bush but fondling hardware and wandering the aisles of the gear-stacked warehouse below his office.

This is an authentic case history. I know because it's my own. And I'm not alone. If the gear industry is a notorious haven for techaholics, there are countless other sufferers who haunt retail outlets, seduced by the chimerical promises of gear they neither really need nor, in many cases, can afford. Anyone who has worked behind the counter of an outdoor shop will be familiar with customers who come perhaps three or four times a week to shuffle in a trance-like state among the displays and drool over the latest exotica.

As you read this, spare a thought for those who have eyes only for the ads on the accompanying pages. You must forgive them: wayward pilgrims, mesmerised by shapely nylon shelters, Lycra prints, silky down bags and sumptuous full-grain leather—they know not what they do.

The treatment for such obsessive behaviour can be traumatic. In my case I was helped by an abrupt career change, relocation interstate and a spouse-enforced credit squeeze. The most telling

phase of my therapy was, ironically, a long stint out bush, where it had all begun. There I rediscovered the folly of being encumbered with useless gear as well as the crushing irrelevance of fads touted as 'outdoor essentials'. Though I occasionally get pangs of withdrawal when I flick through *Wild*, it has been two years since I've been a regular shopper at outdoor emporia or bought anything more exotic than a replacement O-ring for my Trangia.

Twenty years ago the perils of high-tech gear were virtually unknown. It may be that there were people who coveted the latest Mountain Mule rucksack or one of those black jarpas that came dripping in a marinade of waterproofing oil, but such desires were constrained by the limited options and dowdy fashions of the times. Equipment stores tended to be dingy, hard-to-find places that reeked of leather, wool and canvas. Often they were run by gnomish shopkeepers who might have stepped straight from the pages of Tolkien.

Then the scene gradually began to change as a smattering of imported goods arrived from Europe. Natty devices such as Sigg bottles, Wonder torches, Optimus stoves and Swiss Army knives stood in striking contrast to the clunky ex-army paraphernalia that most people made do with at that time. Meanwhile the rustic Paddy Pallin and Flinders Ranges canvas packs began to be overshadowed by brightly coloured models from companies such as Karrimor and Bergans. Likewise, the traditional, home-grown sleeping-bags

in drab, green cotton increasingly faced competition from sleek, lightweight creations by companies which included Point Five, Egge and Mountain Equipment.

Although these stylish imports gathered a following during the early part of the 1970s, prices were often exorbitant. Emerging local manufacturers saw an opening to make more affordable alternatives. While Fairydown and Paddy Pallin persisted with conventional fabrics and styles, a young Brisbane-based climber, Rick White, began to produce sleeping-bags which exploited the nylon fabrics, quality down, and weight-saving designs that distinguished the overseas products.

The success of these lightweight, compact bags laid the foundation on which Mountain Designs expanded its operations. Rick White, now in exile from the gear scene and living the good life on a farm outside Brisbane, reflected on the parochialism of Australian and New Zealand manufacturers prevalent at that time. 'Try telling a New Zealander then that Fairydown sleeping-bags weren't the best in the world—and see what happened to you.'

White was part of a process which saw the gear scene internationalised. 'We were able to glean the best ideas from wherever rather than just being focused on New Zealand', he says. Through the climbing hardware and other lines that he traded, White injected a hip, new, North American influence into the marketplace. The pace of development was spectacular. Product names and specifications seemed to change on a weekly basis and there were inevitable glitches with inadequate supply and faulty materials. But the raw energy and new ideas kept on coming. The gear scene would never be the same.

Ever the opportunist, White was on a climbing trip in the USA when he stumbled upon a new fabric called Gore-Tex. 'It was only just getting off the ground there so we really got in on the bottom floor', recalls White. If there was a turning-point in the technological revolution, it was the arrival of this wondrous stuff with its 'millions of tiny pores' that promised to be both waterproof and breathable. No longer did the business of keeping the rain out mean that you had to stew in your juices like a chook in an oven-bag. The lurid green jackets Mountain Designs released on to

THOSE WERE THE DAYS...

Gear in the 1930s, from the unpublished diaries of
Harry Stephenson

THE RUCKSACK is one of the most important items in a long list. Broadly speaking, it must be large enough to hold your complete load (including food) for 15 or 16 days' tramping. It must be sufficiently strong and durable to withstand being left out in the rain at night and being dragged through thick scrub by day. It must be capable of being easily and speedily unpacked and packed and, most importantly, it must be comfortable to carry.

Without wishing to become involved in an argument regarding the respective merits and faults of framed and unframed packs and having no intention of writing a treatise on 'rucksacks', I shall merely refer to the type which I carry — a modified Bergen steel-framed pack.

The pack itself is a large bag, which is tied with a cord at the top and with a flap large enough to cover the top completely when the bag is crammed full. Attached to the outside of the bag are three large pockets, one of which is roomy enough to hold the sleeping-bag.

The steel frame to which it is attached serves the dual purpose of enabling the load to be suspended by straps from the shoulders and supported by the hips and lower back; and of holding the pack away from the back, which allows air to circulate freely, obviating any chance of catching a chill in the back. It is a scientifically established fact that a load is easiest to carry when the centre of gravity is kept low down and close to the back. The framed pack allows the heaviest articles to be packed in the bottom and back of the bag leaving the pockets and top for lighter articles such as sleeping-bag and clothing.

The genuine Swedish-made Bergen is an excellent model from which to copy both the pack and the frame. Modifications which I favour, however, are much larger pockets, a map pocket with zip-fastener on the outside of the main flap, and the use of 'grip-fasteners' instead of buckles. Such a pack will hold a load of 60 pounds without the need for 'shebas', which load will be sufficient for 15 days of winter food and equipment without being so heavy as to prove unmanageable.



the market were snapped up by a willing public. After some initial hiccups with the first generation of the fabric—problems such as delamination and oil contamination were rife—Gore-Tex went on to become a permanent fixture on the gear scene.

Gore-Tex was part of a wave of innovations which found their way into the

shops during the latter part of the 1970s. Other notable developments included warm but 'ultra-lightweight' fibre-pile jackets from Helly Hansen and North Cape, fast-drying (and -smelling) Lifa polypropylene underwear, Karrimats and Therma-Rests for nights of pneumatic bliss, rugged Cordura pack fabrics, nifty stoves from Trangia and MSR

and palatial dome tents such as the classic North Face VE 24 imported by Paddy Pallin.

By the time *Wild* arrived on the scene in 1981 many of these radical ideas were already old hat. The first issue also carried ads for concepts that, alas, did not enjoy the same longevity; products such as Karrimor's 'Tformat', Boreal Heelocators, Bergans Ignell tents and the Wildcraft Packbed. This last invention was an external-framed pack which unfolded to become a camp stretcher and tent! Like many such attempts to make one thing do the jobs of two, it ended up doing neither particularly well.

The gear revolution gathered pace through the first half of the 1980s. By the middle of the decade there were signs that technology might be going haywire. Rucksacks were tricked up with pockets and dividers, jackets sprouted all sorts of zip openings and tents appeared with more poles than a Solidarity meeting. Nor were climbers and skiers spared the magic wand of the technocrats.

The waxless skis with patterned bases that gave so much impetus to cross-country skiing in the 1970s were joined early in the 1980s by some imaginative alternatives including the mica-soled Epokes and Karhu's Multi-grade bases. These sounded great in theory but under fluky Australian conditions they had the disconcerting habit of giving either too much grip or barely enough.

Meanwhile rockclimbers, for their part, were treated to a dazzling succession of weird devices that tried to seize the initiative from traditional Stoppers and Hexentrics in the racket that is climbing protection. Kirks Cams, Forest Titons, Camp Pentanuts and Lowe Tri-Cams came and mostly went before Friends burst on to the scene and spawned a host of imitators.

The 1980s may have been the decade when greed was good but in the outdoor business gadgets were even better. It seemed as though the weight savings made possible by the innovations of the previous ten years were about to be offset by things like brass candle-lanterns, hacky sacks, survival knives and strobe torches. One might have been forgiven for thinking that eager shopkeepers were looking for anything to keep those tills ringing. In fact, many were scraping to pay rents on prime city locations and responding to a more diverse clientele no longer dominated by impecunious students and hard-core bushwalkers. Travellers, early retirees and besuited adventurers all contributed to a changing retail environment.

Most of the examples of excess hailed from—where else—the USA. And the company that perfected the art of over-the-top gimmickry was the oddly named

Early Winters. From unlikely beginnings as the maker of an esoteric tunnel tent, the Omnipotent, Early Winters blossomed into a mail-order merchandiser of obscure accessories. Warren McLaren, formerly a gear designer for Paddy Pallin, was a keen observer of the phenomenon. 'After a while these were just more knick-knacks, more weight, more cost', comments McLaren—who confessed none the less to

Thule and Jensen packs were followed by significant refinements made by Berghaus, Lowe, Macpac and others. Rick White recalls carrying an Ultima Thule on an expedition to FitzRoy in 1974. 'External-framed packs just became a thing of the past', says White.

Neil Blundy from The Wilderness Shop spent a long, hard apprenticeship

BOOTS A pair of boots can be purchased for as little as 8/6 or a pair can be handmade to the walker's specifications for 55/- or 65/-. It goes without saying that there can be no comparison between the two pairs.

My own boots were made of zug with a thick-welted, three-ply sole. Hand-sewn throughout, they are large enough to allow two thick pairs of socks to be worn. To minimise the chance of going over on the heel, the heel should be flat and very wide. I have tried various kinds of nails in the sole and heel and I have found a combination of Tricounis, Triple Hobs and Sprigs with an iron toe-piece to be the most satisfactory.

The boots should be given periodical greasing with 'Zug' or dubbin and should never on any occasion be placed near a fire. Wet boots are no discomfort, but if an attempt is made to dry them in front of a fire the leather will shrink and harden and the nails will become hot, burn the leather and drop out. When repairs are needed have a full sole sewn on; a half-sole will invariably break away under the instep and peel off.



owning a Teflon-coated Swiss Army knife.

The later Early Winters catalogues were a triumph of tack. If the idea of a torch crafted in rosewood doesn't get you going, how about a pair of Gore-Tex corduroys, a replica of a First World War lighter or an array of bad-taste hats, scarves and bandannas? My favourite Early Winters gismo was the Snifter Set, a cradle attachment and brandy balloon for the top of your personally monogrammed brass candle-lantern. Any suspicions that this concept was perhaps a mite twee were erased by the hard-hitting brochure copy: 'Soothe your tired body. Ponder the day's challenges. Exult. Our Brandy Snifter Set is made to top off a long day's ski or hike. . . Ah-h. In a minute, your brandy, cognac or liqueur is a fragrant, warming cordial that melts away chills and confirms your surmise that all's right with the world. Order yours and toast the twilight.' If this didn't drive you to drink, technology running amok with more mainstream equipment surely would.

Few people dispute that the switch to internal-framed rucksacks was indeed a major breakthrough in gear. Loads became easier to carry and more stable. Early initiatives such as the Ultima

carrying Mountain Mule packs during his student days—doing what he called a Bachelor of Bushwalking. 'When I first went climbing in New Zealand in 1976 I was told I needed a climbing pack so I went out and bought a Berghaus Roc. I was staggered how comfortable it was compared to the H-frames. It was a significant change.'

But in the mid-1980s pack design started to go awry. In a bid to cling to some shred of market advantage most of the key manufacturers pursued the holy grail of the ultimate adjustable rucksack harness. This resulted in clever designs with shoulder-straps and hip-belts that went up, down and sideways. Gear-shop displays were festooned with such engineering marvels as the Lowe Torso Trac, Berghaus Laser, Macpac Liberty, Karrimor SAS and Hallmark MF 90, to name just a few of this infamous breed.

All this ingenuity would have been admirable had there actually been a need to make a rucksack harness quite so adjustable. In fact, as regular carriers of packs know, once a rucksack fits there's no need to change it. Unfortunately, these packs were not only over-elaborate; they also fell to bits.

Andrew King, the man behind the Aiking range of packs, was at the time running a repair business which was

kept busy fixing a number of these designs. 'Many of these packs looked fantastic with moulded plastic all over them. But most were just a big flop.' In the field hapless owners were forced to make running repairs with tape and twine. 'Often we ended up sewing the straps and hip-belts directly on to the packs', says King. Inevitably it was the shops which bore the brunt of customers' complaints. When I casually mentioned these harness systems to one retailer recently he turned ashen-faced and raised crossed index fingers before my eyes.

The fate of rucksacks is symptomatic of a general push to give equipment a high-tech edge. Apart from producing its share of outright duds, this trend raises broader issues about the future of gear and the activities it is supposed to enhance. For one thing, the high-tech push has caused the cost of equipment to escalate to dizzy heights. While the price of certain things has remained relatively stable—a good down sleeping-bag, for instance, has always cost roughly a week's wages—other items are significantly dearer.

In 1982 a Macpac Torre rucksack sold for \$120. The same model now retails for around \$380. Even allowing for inflation and design improvements that's a pretty hefty increase for something which essentially does the same job. It's much the same story with other rucksack brands, and comparable increases have afflicted big-ticket items such as tents, rainwear, boots and stoves. Anyone setting up with a basic complement of gear faces more than double the investment of a decade ago.

As prices have ballooned so has the hype used to promote high-tech gear. This propaganda can be seen as fostering a culture of dependence. Newcomers to the outdoors might be forgiven for thinking that without an armoury of equipment they are neither capable nor worthy of attempting a simple weekend bushwalk or ski tour. The underlying message in many ads and catalogue blurbs is that 'if you don't use one of our incredibly well-engineered and expensive packs/tents/sleeping-bags, you shouldn't be out there'.

According to Warren McLaren, part of the problem is the way marketing highlights the extremes—the 'how we survived on K2 using X-brand sleeping-bags' kind of ad. 'It builds this expectation that to achieve success you've got to have all the technology. In a lot of cases people are being equipped to go to outer space when in fact they are going to the corner store.' McLaren's recent experiences on the Australian Conservation Foundation's Coastwalk showed that it is possible to get by with a few basics and have a more memorable time for doing so.

Ian Maley from Wilderness Equipment feels the marketing emphasis on

hightech means that customers often miss out on a practical understanding of what they're buying. 'It's a bit like the number of people who drive four-wheel-drives. For city people it's the thing to have rather than a real necessity', says Maley. Rick White doesn't necessarily agree that the technology is getting out of hand but he concedes that there are consumers who 'like the complexity, the bells and whistles'. As White observes, 'it looks a bit silly when you see people camping at Girraween with Everest tents and sleeping-bags'.

The flip side of this attitude is that some people might assume that simply by forking out for an expedition tent you are instantly qualified to camp out on the summit of Mt Jagungal in a full-on blizzard. Neil Blundy has noticed 'drastic change in people's expectations about what the gear can do for them'. He believes that in some cases it has affected their self-reliance. 'For instance, whether you stay warm and dry in the bush; while it has obviously got a lot to do with the gear you've got, it's also got a lot to do with the person who is using it.'

Yvon Chouinard, one of the most influential American gear designers, takes a provocative line on the proliferation of equipment. 'As far as the gear goes, you don't need any of that shit. Nobody needs that stuff', he says. 'If you want a real adventure, you leave all that at home and encourage the birds to shit on your head.'

Such heresy, though invigorating, seems odd coming from the supremo of Patagonia, an American company which since the late 1970s has done more than most to flog what is chic in outdoor apparel. With Patagonia having recently begun a direct assault on the Australian market it will be interesting to see in

what way the founder's philosophy is applied here.

The emergence of a fashion emphasis to what is supposedly functional clothing has been one of the most conspicuous changes in the shops. While only die-hards will mourn the passing of the hair shirts of yesteryear, there are concerns that the glitz might get out of hand. Increasingly, people are being urged to fork out for this season's styles and colours. Polarplus comes in gaudy prints, rainwear is multi-hued and basic bush clobber is tarted up to give it street appeal.

At stake is the outdoor industry's long-standing reputation for honest, reliable products, as well as its credibility in encouraging a more responsible environmental ethic. The shift away from specialisation and utility to fashion-driven merchandising suggests that manufacturers and retailers are stepping on to the crowded treadmill of conspicuous consumption. The posturing of companies which profess to be green is often at odds with their glossy brochures and relentless push for sales.

Andrew King laments the poor standard of many imported products, particularly those from China and Korea. 'You might spend 60 dollars on one of these day packs and it might last a year if you're lucky. It usually costs too much to repair so most people toss it away and start again.' For King this disposable mentality is a powerful motivation for providing a better alternative. 'A good-quality product helps you to enjoy your activity and hopefully have a better appreciation of the wilderness.'

In addition to the potential waste of resources there is a risk that the gear will assume a significance out of all proportion to its true role in the field. Thus the

JACKET A comparatively recent innovation so far as walkers are concerned is the wind- and shower-proof jacket. Cut very much on the lines of a large coat-shirt and gathered at the waist, the jacket is usually made from gabardine, grenfell cloth or similar material.

A zip-fastener allows the front to be fastened securely. One great fault with the manufactured article is that the pockets are far too small. On my own jacket the pockets are large enough to put my hands in during cold weather.

The fact that the jacket is wind-proof makes it warmer than several sweaters in a cold wind. I have yet to see a material which is completely rain-proof when worn as a coat, but a gabardine jacket worn in conjunction with a groundsheet will keep one dry for a considerable time.



TENT A tent is one of the most important and at the same time least used items of a walker's equipment. Although it must always be carried in case of rain or sudden storm, it is safe to say that three-quarters of my nights out of doors have been spent beneath a starry canopy without the need for a tent. On the other hand, when rain does come shelter is essential.

While all walking parties equip themselves with tents, remarkably few have at their disposal adequate shelter when a rainy night is encountered. The main reason is that no tent will keep the occupants dry unless it is pitched **PROPERLY**. One party of walkers camped in a steady downpour at Eight Mile on the Howqua River and, out of a group of 30-odd, the occupants of only **ONE** two-man tent spent a dry night. Let us consider these facts: water will 'spray' through any class of unproofed material, however well pitched the tent may be; if the tent is badly erected - that is, with wrinkles and creases anywhere in the walls or roof - rain will drip through. On the other hand, a well-proofed fabric will resist properly a proofed material **WILL** allow drips to enter. The obvious thing is to carry a proofed tent and when the weather is threatening, pitch it well.

A hike-tent is sometimes made from a material that is too heavy to pitch easily. In my opinion, a green japara tent is too heavy to be suspended from a cord guy line. The fabric is too stiff to allow the roof to be pegged to the ground free from wrinkles. White japara, when heavily waxed with paraffin, is much the same. Probably the best tent fabric obtainable in Australia is the English Waxed Kampette, a material which weighs only 1 1/4 ounces a square yard and which is entirely free from any stiffness; with the ridgeline taut the walls can be pegged out absolutely evenly and provided the roof or walls are not touched (no tent will permit that) one can keep absolutely dry in the heaviest downpour. The addition of a fly-sheet would keep the roof itself dry and enable one to remain in the tent during bad weather - to move about, prepare meals, sit and read, in the course of which it would be impossible not to rub against the tent.

The size of a tent is a matter for personal choice and requirements. The most popular is the two-man Walking Club model which was first adopted by Bill Waters. My preference is for a one-man tent and the overall measurements of mine are: length - six feet six inches; width - four feet; and height - four feet. The width and height both taper to 15 inches at the back, but the tent is sufficiently large to enable me (but certainly not 'tiny' Sanson) to sleep and to sit up and pull on my boots in the morning. Those, in my opinion, are the only requirements of a tent - that it should be large enough to sleep in and when properly pitched be absolutely weatherproof.

Of course, a tent which is to be used in snow must be very much larger and will require a sewn-in floor. In addition to a bedroom, it must in an emergency be a kitchen, dining-room, card-parlour; in fact, everything except (we sincerely hope) a bathroom.



essence of being in the bush, the opportunity to live the simple life, is increasingly compromised by the clutter of apparatus. Implacable market pressures foster an attitude that values gear ownership above actual accomplishment. Gee-wizardry displaces the spirit of self-reliance and old-fashioned bushcraft.

As letter writer Peter Lee noted in *Wild* no 42: 'One of the basic reasons humans go out into the wilderness is to escape the very things they are now taking with

them. The modern bushwalker is confronted with a veritable maze of outdoor high-tech equipment that is largely unnecessary.' The cult status enjoyed by equipment troubles many within the industry as well. 'I must say I get heartily sick of ending up around a campfire and the discussion basically degenerating into debates on equipment', says Ian Maley.

And what of the role of magazines like *Wild* in shaping these attitudes? *Wild's* equipment news is strong on infor-

mation but the vast number of items featured makes the magazine relatively reliant on publicity from the suppliers themselves rather than on a more independent evaluation.

However, the bulk of the magazine reflects an earthier reality. The feature stories usually convey the impression that people who actually get things done revel in the freedom of not having to colour-co-ordinate their accessories. Likewise, in contrast to the slick advertising images, the action photos typically show people who have a good time despite not owning a current-model rucksack or a 'gossamer membrane' jacket.

These reservations notwithstanding, there can be little argument that technology has made life in the wild more comfortable and accessible. Tents are lighter and roomier. Packs are more stable and versatile. Outdoor clothing such as thermal underwear, pile jackets and Gore-Tex parkas make the elements more bearable. Even boots are neater and better fitting. New-age gear in all its guises has redefined the notion of roughing it.

The performance of this gear has also allowed those on the leading edge of adventure to push the limits of what can be done. Expedition bushwalks are now more feasible with feather-weight gear and freeze-dried food. The rising standards in skiing, canoeing and climbing owe much to the evolution of skating gear, Tupperware kayaks and sticky rubber, respectively. Many alpine-style mountaineering ascents have only become possible with advances in protective clothing and sleeping-bags covered with Gore-Tex. The innovations which offer the average user an extra measure of safety have allowed others to stick their necks out yet further.

Many of these much-vaunted items do, however, have their drawbacks. Dome and tunnel tents are heavily reliant on flimsy fabrics and fine tolerances. A broken pole or fitting can render them useless—as members of the 1983 Heard Island expedition discovered when winds shredded their expensive domes one violent afternoon on the beach at Atlas Cove. Similarly, there are quite a few snow-campers who have rued not taking a closed-cell foam mat after a night of torment on a self-inflating mat which leaks.

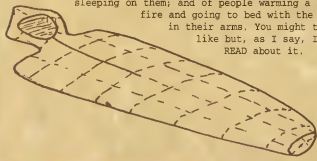
As materials become lighter in weight and designs more intricate, the margin for error narrows. In some situations the need to fuss over the gear becomes an unwelcome distraction. 'You might end up with short-term security but the longer you are away from home, the greater the chance of things going wrong. You are putting more links in the chain', Warren McLaren says.

SLEEPING-BAG Six years ago a down sleeping-bag was a curiosity. I will remember the wonder and admiration with which I first set eyes on Bill Water's flea-bag when he unpacked it on the way to Aberfeldy at Easter 1933. Today, however, the position is reversed and the curiosity is any type of bedding other than a sleeping-bag.

Genuine eiderdown is virtually unobtainable in Australia, but a satisfactory substitute is a very fine down (probably duck) which costs 12/6, 15/- or 20/- a pound. Two-and-a-half or three pounds are required for a really cosy bag. Shapes and sizes vary according to individual tastes; the measurements of mine are as follows: length (shoulder to foot) - five feet six inches; circumference (around shoulders) - four feet; diameter (circular piece at foot) - one foot. The opening down the front is closed with a zip-fastener and the bag is sewn along the top, across the shoulders. Thus the only opening is at the neck, and for cold weather a hood covers the head.

Even in midsummer, one rarely experiences a warm night in the open. Sunset is usually followed by a cool breeze and if the zip is left unfastened a comfortable night will be spent. On the other hand, in midwinter one can always spend a warm night if one or two simple precautions are taken. The zip, of course, should be fastened right up and the hood pulled well down over the face; choose a sleeping place which is sheltered from the wind or if this is impossible make some sort of a wind-break to sleep behind. (Sleeping in a tent is the ideal solution and even the tent can be made doubly snug by pitching it in a sheltered position.) One or two other tips which will be found helpful are to carry an inner bag of silk and crawl into this before getting into the sleeping-bag; sleep without socks and thus allow the blood to circulate freely (for the same reason do not wear any sweater or clothing that is too tight under the arms or across the chest); a handkerchief loosely knotted round the neck will keep one amazingly warm. The best idea of all, however, is to sleep between two big fellows - however, one has to be an adept to manage this time and time again, so it might be as well not to count on doing it too often.

I have read of people digging a shallow trench and filling it with hot ashes, covering the ashes with earth and sleeping on them; and of people warming a rock in the fire and going to bed with the rock clasped in their arms. You might try it if you like but, as I say, I have only READ about it.



Harry Stephenson (see Contributors in Wild no 16) has been bushwalking since 1924 and has recently embarked on a series of trips to the Himalayas. He is the author and publisher of a number of books including *Cattlemen and Huts of the High Plains* and *Skirting the High Plains*.

Despite this it would be naive to think that high-tech design will not continue to infiltrate the rucksack sports. Nor is there any sign that fads and trinkets are going to disappear if recent ads for mini espresso makers, doodads to roll up your rucksack straps and all those hundred-dollar thongs are any indication. But against the tide of technology are a few positive trends as well. And in some cases the best way forward has been to look backwards.

Take walking boots, for example. After several years of flirting with combinations of fabrics and leather, boot manufacturers have by and large reverted to tried and proven all-leather styles. The benefits of using Cordura nylon and Gore-Tex in footwear were often outweighed by a loss of weatherproofness, durability and performance. Similarly, the makers of rucksacks have recently pulled back from the brink of irrelevance by concentrating on simpler, sturdier harnesses, incorporating fewer 'features' and returning to more waterproof canvas fabrics.

In the case of packs these corrections have come about largely because local manufacturers have taken heed of their customers' experiences in the bush. Australia is often cited as one of the

world's toughest proving grounds for equipment. Its inhabitants also have a reputation for being wary of snake-oil salesmen and quick-fix solutions. While overseas corporations will continue to hawk their wares in this country, there is something heartening about having a tradition of small, local enterprises which turn out gear that's tough, practical and long-lasting.

Another healthy development is the growing use of recycled and renewable raw materials. As well as the much publicised advent of fleece jackets made of PET bottles, there is scope for recycled materials in the construction of packs and tents. Warren McLaren, who is now pursuing a career in 'eco-design', believes that other products made from less processed materials will also have an impact. 'It's a real growth area in design', he says.

When it comes to gross consumerism it has to be said that the acquisitive excesses of your humble gear freak hardly rate alongside those practised by devotees of high fashion in clothing, cars or cosmetics. Yet we need to encourage a robust scepticism if wild places are to remain a refuge from the disposable culture and other excesses that go to the heart of so many social and environmental ills. Indeed, there are those who argue that lessons learnt in the bush—about doing more with less, stripping away superfluous junk and valuing functional, well-made things—can actively contribute to a different kind of consumer ethic.

Two ads in a recent issue of the North American magazine *Outside* neatly summarise the debate. The first, for Asics running shoes, carries the following headline: 'OBSESSIVE? COMPULSIVE? PRONE TO ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR? HAVE WE GOT THE SHOE FOR YOU?' Then at the back of the magazine there's a small advertisement for sandals with the beguiling headline 'Techno-Peasant'. With tongue firmly in cheek, the ad shows arrows surrounding a sandal and shoe, highlighting such revolutionary features as 'top part', 'bottom part', 'thingy', 'stuff' and 'some other stuff'.

Perhaps this is the way of the future; gear of which the key selling-point is that it is assertively low-tech. Instead of carrying so many time-saving devices you never get around to using them, or so much lightweight gear that it weighs a tonne, perhaps it's time someone declared the outdoors a fashion-free zone. A place where it's mandatory for flocks of birds to dump on your head. My advice, speaking from personal experience: don't wait for the authorities to act. As the ads say, just do it. ■

Quentin Chester (see Contributors in Wild no 3) is a freelance writer who specialises in outdoor topics. After living for some years in exile on the Hawkesbury River, New South Wales, dreaming of the Flinders Ranges, he has since returned to his native Adelaide. He is the author of *The Kimberley-Horizons of Stone*, reviewed in Wild no 48.

WILD BUSHWALKING



In Kosciusko's

*John Chapman
describes five
walks in the
lesser-known
corners of
Australia's
highest
National Park*

SHADOW





Kosciuszko National Park is one of Australia's more significant reserves as it not only contains the highest peaks in the country but also protects a huge area of natural alpine scenery. The Main Range is the best-known region of the park but there are other extensive areas that are rewarding to visit.

This article is designed to entice you to explore other regions of the park, in particular its northern half, which has easy access. There are more little-visited areas than those described here; notably the scrubby Bogong Peaks in the far north and the Cascades and Byadbo in the south. Once you have been lured away from the Main Range you will find that there is a lot of excellent territory to explore. The guide *Bushwalking in Kosciuszko National Park* by Charles Warner describes the major features and many hidden gems throughout the park and is recommended for those who don't

want detailed notes but prefer a little more adventure.

Walks covering a range of standards have been described here to cater for overnight walkers of varying experience. In the north a medium-standard walk to the Cooleman area has been included. This is one of the hidden gems of the park with the valley providing easy walking. To supply some additional interest, a difficult second day wading downriver has been described. Deleting that day changes this walk into a fairly easy one which is none the less still well worth doing.

The old goldfields of Kiandra are situated in a region of wide, open plains filled with snow-grass. An easy walk to the closest high mountain, Tantangara Mountain, is described here. While it is possible to do the entire walk in a long day the suggested route provides time to explore the open plains and climb some

of the lesser hills. It is an excellent walk for those with less fitness or experience.

Also presented is an alternative to the traditional walk to Tabletop Mountain, just south of Kiandra. This circuit involves both some off-track walking through scrub and some walking along vehicle tracks. The first day is a bit rough at times but the walk can easily be shortened if there are problems and it gives some idea of what alpine scrub is like.

The best-known mountain in the park outside the Main Range is Mt Jagungal. It dominates the northern plains and is the focus for the extended walk described. While the mountain forms the centre of a 'wilderness zone' this description is debatable—well-used vehicle tracks cross its flanks. The route described here uses these tracks to get to the mountain; the tracks are then left for open walking across alpine plains. The

of this fine park you will no longer head for the Main Range so frequently.

Before describing the walks themselves, there are a few things you need to know. Technically, an entry fee is charged to take a car into the Kosciusko National Park. However, the only boom gates are on the roads to the ski resorts of the Thredbo and Perisher valleys. The best solution is to purchase a yearly pass, which is cost-effective if you stay in the

road, which is a side road to the Perisher road.

In the north the bitumen-covered Snowy Mountains Highway slashes diagonally across the park from Cooma to Tumut. The highway passes through Kiandra where two of the walks start. Further north a side road off this scenic highway follows Long Plain and provides access to the Cooleman Caves walk.



Chris Baxter on Mt Jagungal's rocky summit. Baxter collection. Right, Cooleman Creek's Murray Cave. John Chapman

park for at least five days during the year. No fees are charged or permits needed for camping in any of the overnight rest sites or for bushwalking. It is handy to know that overnight camping is allowed at almost all the picnic areas and these can make for a handy late-night stop.

November to April is the best period for bushwalking in the park. Early spring can be good in the lower regions such as at Cooleman Caves but this courts the danger of being bogged if it snows. If you wish to walk in the shoulder seasons, the walks based around Kiandra are suggested as road access is reliable. The Snowy Mountains Highway is kept open all year round and is closed by snowfall for only very short periods.

In winter most of the park is under snow. Why walk at that time of year when skiing is a preferable option? Of course, you can trudge through snow—which I have done—but it's not very enjoyable. In late autumn there is no snow. This season can provide good walking conditions but the short days restrict itineraries.

This is a very large park which is crossed by three major, sealed roads—the side roads are usually dirt. The most popular of these is the access road leading to the ski resorts in the south. This road is used to get to Island Bend for the walk to Kidmans Hut. Island Bend is on the north side of the Guthega

The third major access road runs from Khancoban past Cabramurra to Kiandra, where it joins the Snowy Mountains Highway. This narrow, sealed road provides the access to Round Mountain for the Mt Jagungal walk.

The campaign to promote minimum-impact bushwalking has been very successful and walkers should always take care to minimise their impact on the environment. Some basic rules apply to the park. Camping is not permitted in the catchment of any alpine lakes and fires are not allowed above the tree-line.

Fuel stoves should be taken and used even where fires are allowed. If you do have a fire make sure that it has been properly extinguished by drowning it with water. All rubbish should be carried out. Use toilets where they are available or bury toilet waste properly. Spread out in untracked country to prevent pads from forming. The main point is to leave places in as good—or better—condition as that in which you find them.

Many of these walks venture into areas which are above the tree-line and exposed to the elements. Walkers must be well equipped, with experience of how to use their equipment properly. Persons who undertake these walks do so at their own risk. Notes like these are necessarily brief and do not describe every detail. ■

John Chapman (see Contributors in Wild no 1) is one of Australia's most travelled and widely respected bushwalking writers. He is particularly well known for his books of Tasmanian track notes.

COOLEMAN

The Cave Creek valley is one of the most scenic parts of the Kosciusko National Park with colourful gorges, good views and caves being the major attractions. While it is possible to drive very close to the most spectacular formations, to approach them by walking will give you the best appreciation of this area's unique features.

The Cave Creek valley is filled with limestone through which streams have dissolved underground passages. This has resulted in the creation of dry streams, caves and steep gorges. The suggested walk combines the major, cave-related features with the nearby grassy plains for contrast.

Maps

The Rules Point and Peppercorn 1:25 000 Central Mapping Authority (NSW) maps cover the entire Cooleman area. Both are needed for the walk as described.

Access

Follow the Snowy Mountain Highway north from Kiandra for 19 kilometres to Rules Point. Turn right on to the Long Plain road and follow this north for 13 kilometres to the Cooinbil Hut turn-off on the right. Park near this side road. The Long Plain road is closed in winter. At other times conventional two-wheel-drive vehicles can normally use the road except after heavy rain when the surface becomes very slippery.

Permits

None are required for bushwalking in this area or for exploring the five open caves but permits are needed to enter any of the other caves.

Safety

During and after heavy rainfall the often dry streams can start flowing. While they present no great problems to walkers, do not enter the caves during or after heavy rainfall because water-levels can rise very quickly. If entering a cave it is advisable to have spare lighting and a helmet as the ceilings are very hard!

From the Cooinbil Hut turn-off follow the main road north for a further four kilometres, then turn right on to Blue Waterholes fire track. Follow this for three kilometres to a car-park in a saddle (GR 484592). (A car shuttle to here is possible if you have more than one vehicle.) The road continues on but is only suitable for four-wheel-drive vehicles.

Follow the road south-east, descending through forest, for one kilometre. When the road emerges on to the plain, leave it and walk south following an old, faint vehicle track. This provides very pleasant walking through the alpine meadows on the edge of the forest.

Carefully follow the faint track south for two kilometres to a small valley just past some hut ruins. The ruins are now just a pile of rocks and not worth

CAVES

investigating. For a more interesting side-trip follow the valley upstream for 400 metres to the sink-hole (GR 482568). Two good creeks flow into this hole and simply disappear. Collect water here for the rest of the day.

From here leave the old track and walk south-east across the grass to Harris Waterhole. This is the only place where surface water is found in the valley. To prevent pollution of the underground water-system, camping here or elsewhere on the dry Cooleman Plain is discouraged.

Continue by following the open, dry valley east for one kilometre to a walking track where the valley swings north-east. Follow this track for 700 metres, then leave it and swing right to enter a dry gorge.

From here the valley becomes very interesting with dry, rocky walls towering on both sides. Follow the gorge downstream for 700 metres to Murray Cave. The entrance is a deep fissure in the cliff on the western side of the (usually dry) Cave Creek. A large chamber is just inside the entrance with the main passage on the left. Lighting is necessary here and hard hats are desirable. The main passage extends for 100 metres to where it is blocked by a water-syphon.

Continue to follow the dry water-course downstream past many cliffs and cave entrances. When the valley widens a vehicle track—the Blue Waterholes fire track—is met. Turn left and follow this to Blue Waterholes. Here the creek magically appears as quite a large stream exiting from a cave system in the opposite bank.

Blue Waterholes is accessible to four-wheel-drive vehicles and is a popular camping place. Follow a good walking track downstream, crossing a side creek then Cave Creek. This track cuts across a flat ridge and there is a good campsite for bushwalkers on the left near the stream.

On the second day of the walk follow the well-used track downstream through Clarke Gorge. This gorge is very spectacular. It is often unavoidable to get wet feet on some of the creek crossings. Continue for one kilometre to where some cave entrances can be seen on the south side of the creek. This is Barbers Cave.

To explore Barbers Cave cross the stream and follow a foot-pad up the gully on the right. This climbs steeply uphill and leads to two sink-holes behind the ridge. Descend into the second one to enter Barbers Cave.

This is a fairly extensive cave and it is possible to follow the cave system

down to the entrances seen near Cave Creek. There are two exits: one requires sliding through a wet, rocky slot; to reach the other necessitates a difficult climb. If you have any problems the safest exit is the way you came in.

Continue to follow Cave Creek downstream passing through a less interesting area until a waterfall is suddenly met. Here the valley drops away sharply in a fine set of falls and cascades.

After enjoying the view descend into the valley below following a steep route on the right. From here there are no tracks. Once on the valley floor simply follow the stream for two kilometres to the junction with the Goodradigbee River.

The route is very slow with plenty of scrambling and deep wading along the way. The wild roses are prolific and at times annoying. One deep set of pools can be avoided by climbing over the ridge on the left from where there are fine views of the gorge.

At the river junction are several good campsites on the flat between the two streams. If time permits it is worth while to explore downstream along the valley of the Goodradigbee River.



On day three cross the flat to its western end where an old vehicle track will be seen heading up on to the ridge above. Follow this south-west, climbing steeply for 400 metres. It is worth while to deviate to the northern edge for views over the gorges.

Once the ridge levels out the track becomes less obvious until it all but disappears at a saddle (GR 541561) before the steep climb to Black Mountain. While it is possible to climb

over Black Mountain, the more rewarding route is to return through Clarke Gorge.

From the saddle veer to the right (north) and cross a tiny valley just below the saddle. Contour west, then down grassy slopes into the valley of Cave Creek. The main track will be met upstream from the waterfalls.

Follow the main track back through Clarke Gorge to Blue Waterholes. Follow the Blue Waterholes fire track



upstream and where it leaves the valley continue to follow the track south. This climbs a side valley and then crosses a lightly timbered spur to the open valley of Seventeen Flat Creek.

One kilometre across the valley turn right on to a less obvious track. After an awkward creek crossing follow this track west for one and a half kilometres, then turn south at the junction on to Mosquito Creek fire track. Follow this south through Blue Waterhole Saddle, then further south for two kilometres out on to the grassy valley of Mosquito Creek.

Here the track swings west; ignore the side track heading south towards Old Currango homestead. Instead follow the track westwards for five kilometres out to the wide, open valley of Long Plain.

Leave the fire track and follow the edge of the eastern hills north-north-west for five kilometres to Cooinbil Hut ruin and your car. ■

TANTANGARA MOUNTAIN

The rolling snow-plains to the east of Kiandra provide some delightful, easy walking. Most of the valleys in this area are grass-filled frost hollows which are fringed by very open snow-gum forests. The interesting Boggy Plain and the high summit of Tantangara Mountain are the major features of this walk. The walk described below is quite easy and allows plenty of time to explore the area.

Initially this walk does not follow any tracks and the route crosses snow-grass and some very light heath. Start walking by descending north-west to cross Black Walters Creek by way of the convent log. Climb north-west on to the open spur following a rough pad which soon peters out. The next objective is to meet the Nungar Creek fire track which is two kilometres to the north.

There are two basic routes to Nungar Creek fire track. The first simply follows the eastern bank of the Eucumbene River upstream; the other follows the contour across the hill passing through a saddle (GR 363296), then drops down to meet the fire track. Once on the fire track turn right and follow it eastwards.

This track passes over open plains and through some very open snow-gum forests. After three kilometres it crosses Chance Creek at a ford. Walkers can usually keep their feet dry by crossing just downstream.

Continue to follow Nungar Creek fire track north-east. More light forest leads to a crossing of Kiandra Creek in its head-waters which is soon followed by a steady climb over a forested ridge.

A longer descent follows leading to a track junction on the edge of the trees in the Tantangara Creek valley. Turn right on to the Alpine

Creek fire track and follow this across the open valley for one kilometre to another ford across a creek. After this ford the track swings right; when it swings back left, drop packs for a short side-trip to a waterfall on the edge of the hill. This is worth a short visit even though the gully below the falls is filled with scrub.

Collect the packs and continue to follow the fire track to the edge of the forest, 500 metres away. Leave the fire track here and walk south-east into the low saddle above, which is on the southern edge of Boggy Plain. This is an interesting area with many rocky outcrops amongst the alpine moors.

Camp can be set up anywhere in the forests around the edge of the plain. Suggested suitable areas are the northern edge near Boggy Plain Creek or the eastern edge under Blackfellows Hill. To prevent campsite damage I shall not recommend individual sites.

As day two's walk is short it is worth while to explore Boggy Plain during the morning. Both Blanket Hill and Blackfellows Hill provide good views.

Walk back across Boggy Plain to meet the Alpine Creek fire track. Depending on where you choose to meet it, follow the track as it climbs on to the large northern ridge from Tantangara Mountain. Leave the fire track on the southern end just where it begins to descend (GR 421311) and follow pads south into the light forest.

The pads are at times excellent, but be warned: they are formed by brumbies and don't always go where walkers wish to go. Using the brumby

pads where appropriate follow the ridge south as it climbs gently for two kilometres through open forest. As the ridge steepens the trees become more spaced and provide views over Boggy Plain.

Maps

The *Denison and Tantangara* 1:25 000 CMA (NSW) maps cover the entire route. Alternatively, the *Tantangara* 1:100 000 Nat-map can be used.

Access

The walk starts from the eastern side of the Eucumbene River, two kilometres south-east of Kiandra. Park at the spacious cutting 300 metres east of the bridge over the river.

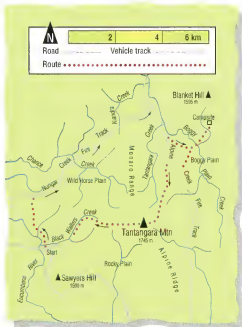
Safety

The walk crosses the summit of Tantangara Mountain which consists of an exposed plateau with very few trees. Parties should have suitable clothing for snowfall and strong winds and be prepared to retrace the first day's walk if the weather conditions are severe.

The summit of Tantangara Mountain is a broad plateau. Follow it south-west to the summit. This spot provides good views over most of the Kosciusko National Park.

From the summit two faint pads head off westwards, each leading to one of the two ridges. Don't take the northern pad; follow the pad heading directly west. This soon enters a belt of light trees and descends to a level, open ridge with a rocky knoll on its end. Pass on the northern side of the knoll and descend east into the headwaters of Black Walters Creek. Beware of being misled by the many brumby pads in this area.

Follow the open grass along the eastern side of the creek. This leads on to an old vehicle track which is followed back to the Snowy Mountains Highway and reaches its just west of the car-park. ■



TABLETOP MOUNTAIN

This is a high mountain south of Kiandra which provides fine views of the park. The most common way to approach this mountain is to follow the fire track south from Kiandra and return the same way. A far more interesting route is to approach the peak by following one of the valleys, then return using the fire tracks. While this involves a considerable amount of off-track walking through bush, navigation is easy as the route basically follows a stream.

From Sawyers Hut follow the closed four-wheel-drive track south. While the road has a locked barrier there seem to be plenty of recreational users with keys judging by the traffic I have seen.

Maps

The *Denison* and *Cabramurra* 1:25 000 CMA (NSW) sheets cover the entire route.

Access

The walk starts at Sawyers Hut which is situated beside the Snowy Mountains Highway seven kilometres east of Kiandra. There is plenty of space to park your car beside the hut.

Safety

Because of the off-track walking it is advisable to be able to navigate competently and also to be experienced at selecting a route through scrub. After heavy rainfall the Eucumbene River can become difficult to cross. If this happens it is possible to walk out to Kiandra along the Tabletop Mountain fire track and then along the highway to Sawyers Hut in one day.

After an easy two kilometres of walking along a timbered ridge the track divides. Keep to the major tracks on the left as you descend to the Eucumbene River.

The vehicle track crosses the river by way of a deep ford. Ignore this and cross more easily 100 metres downstream round the bend. From here there are no tracks for the rest of the day. Once across the river climb south-east across the open spur and back down to the river again before the scrub begins.

Some rough sidling leads south to the junction with Tabletop Creek. Turn left into this valley and follow it upstream for three kilometres to the junction with Waterhole Creek. The walking is slow and rough with light scrub and steep side slopes.

At the junction climb south up the steep ridge between the two creeks. This passes through forest, then emerges on to the open valley of Waterhole Creek. Walk two kilometres up the valley to camp inside the edge of the forest before the next narrowing in the valley.

On day two climb south-west from Waterhole Creek through the forest to meet the Tabletop Mountain fire track on top of the main ridge. Turn right and follow the track north-west towards Tabletop Mountain. It is most easily climbed on its northern side so continue almost past the mountain before dropping packs for the side-trip.

After enjoying the sweeping views continue north-west along the fire track for one and a half kilometres to a major track junction. Turn right and follow the Four Mile Hill fire track north-east for two kilometres to Broken Dam Hut. There are some historic relics in this area worth a long stop.

The most obvious feature is the Broken Dam which is found in the valley south-east from the hut.

Continue following the fire track north-east for a further six kilometres along a timbered ridge to the attractive Eucumbene River. The ford is the same place where the track was left on the approach.

Cross the river below the ford, then follow the fire track back to Sawyers Hut where the walk started. ■



MT JAGUNGAL

No set of track notes to the Kosciusko National Park would be complete without a walk incorporating Mt Jagungal. It is the dominant peak in one of the most easily walked sections of the park. Open snow-plains abound in this area and it is possible to walk freely in most directions.



O'Keefes Hut under a threatening sky. *Baxter. Right, Kidmans Hut, Monica Chapman*

The walk suggested here uses well-known tracks that penetrate into the region, then leaves these to walk across the snow-plains.

From the Round Mountain car-park follow the fire track south past the locked gate for one kilometre to a track junction. Turn left (the return will be from the right) and head downhill to Round Mountain Hut. Continue for another two kilometres to a ford over the Tumut River.

Collect water here as it is the last for several hours. Wade across the river, then continue to follow the Farm Ridge fire track south for eight kilometres. The track is being allowed to become overgrown but can still be clearly followed for most of the way. When in doubt keep to the ridge crest and the track will soon become obvious again.

Where it meets the Grey Mare fire track turn right and walk south-west for one and a half kilometres to O'Keefes Hut. There is good camping near the hut or inside the edge of the nearby forest.

On day two leave the fire track and head east across the grassy plain then over a low ridge into the valley of Bogong Creek. Here the valley is steep-sided and filled with light scrub. Head south up the valley keeping well above the creek. The scrub soon eases as open plains are reached. Easy walking then leads south to Jagungal Saddle.

If the weather is clear, a side-trip to the summit of Mt Jagungal is recommended. From the saddle climb west through some light forest to the open slopes above. An easy walk across the alpine plateau leads to the summit. The

view from the top is one of the best there is.

Collecting the packs continue south across open country to McAlister Saddle. A shallow tarn backed by a cliff provides an interesting formation just before the saddle. Camp somewhere near the saddle but not beside the tarn.

On day three continue walking south then south-east towards North Bulls Peak. Before the peak an old, faint vehicle track is joined. Follow this track

Maps

The *Khanoban* 1:50 000 CMA (NSW) map covers the entire area. There are several other maps such as the *Round Mountain* 1:50 000 Victorian Mountain Tramping Club map and *Tim Lambie's Mt Jagungal and the Brassy Mountains* map which can provide useful information on old features such as ruins, fence-lines and unofficial tracks.

Access

The walk starts at the turn-off to Round Mountain fire track which is 20 kilometres south of Cabramurra on the Khanoban to Kiandra road. This turn-off is on a sweeping bend where the road changes direction from south to west if coming from Cabramurra. Park west of the fire track under the trees near the road, or just off the track on the ridge 400 metres south if you have a four-wheel-drive.

Safety

This area is an exposed alpine region. Most of the walk is around the tree-line. Hence walkers will need to be properly equipped and prepared to modify their trip plans according to the weather.

through the light forest on the western side of Bulls Peaks. Three peaks can be readily climbed by short side-trips from the track.

This track becomes fainter and soon after passing South Bulls Peak it vanishes into the light scrub. Keep heading south into a distinct, shallow saddle, then descend south on to the open plains of the Burrungubugge River.

Cross the plains to the river and camp nearby among the trees. From here a day can easily be spent exploring Kidmans Hut and the Brassy Mountains.

On day four head north-west across open country and pass through the saddle between Mailbox Hill and Cup and Saucer Hill. Both are easily climbed but the Cup and Saucer is the better one with a rocky summit tower providing fine views over the Valentine Creek valley.

Continue north-west to Tarn Bluff and down to the plains beside the Geehi River. Cross the river and head north across the low hills of the Strombo Range towards Mt Jagungal. Continue to the creek on the southern side of Mt Jagungal. Camp on the flat ridge crowned with pockets of trees on the south of the creek. Water is not

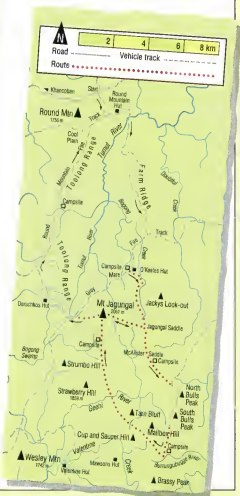
always reliable here and in summer it may be necessary to stop a little earlier near more reliable water-supplies.

To begin day five head north directly up the slopes of Mt Jagungal passing to the west of the cliff-face. Initially there is some light scrub but this soon changes into grass. It is quite a grunt carrying a pack all the way but the view is well worth the effort.

The descent is on the western side. A rough pad initially shows the way down through the rocks on to the more open slopes below where it is invariably lost. There are two choices; keep descending due west into forest or head south along the ridge for 250 metres, then descend through the forest. The target is the open, grassy valley at the head of the Tumut River.

Once the plain is reached climb on to the fire track and follow it west to a track junction. Veer right and follow the Round Mountain fire track north for seven kilometres to an open valley with a good creek flowing across it. Camp in this valley.

Day six involves half a day's walk north along the fire track back to the start of the walk. Much of this section was burnt in a recent fire and has yet to recover. ■



KIDMANS HUT

An interesting and often overlooked region of the park is the corner north of Island Bend. Perhaps it's because it falls across four maps but that should not deter keen walkers. An advantage of this area compared to the better-known region around Schlink Pass is that it has lower altitudes while still providing pleasant walking even in poor weather.

The suggested walk takes three days but can easily be extended with more exploring or cut to two days if you just want to gain a feel for the area.

If you have parked near Island Bend follow the road north-east to the locked gates at a road junction near Snowy

the climb. An easy descent from the gap leads west down to Kidmans Hut. Camp either near the hut or among the trees on the edge of the plains.

On day two it is recommended that you embark on an excellent day walk from Kidmans Hut to the Brassy Mountains. From the hut follow the

leads west up on to the ridge of the Brassy Mountains. Follow the ridge south over Brassy Peak to Big Brassy Peak. Explore as far south as Tin Hut before returning along the same attractive route.

Leaving Kidmans Hut on day three cross the river to the south and follow

Maps

The *Khanabon*, *Mount Kosciuszko*, *Berridale* and *Euclumbene* 1:50 000 CMA (NSW) maps are needed. This walk crosses the corners of all four and all should be taken.

Access

The walk starts from the Island Bend Pondage just off the Guthega Road. Park either near Island Bend or six kilometres further east at the locked gate near Snowy Adit.

Safety

This walk can be completed in almost any weather as all the major streams are crossed by bridges. Some navigational skill and experience at avoiding thick scrub patches are helpful for the descent into Tolbar Creek.

A more direct route out from Kidmans Hut is possible by following the Burrungubugge River downstream to Constances Hut and the road system. The ridge to the east provides easier walking to Constances Hut than the scrubby and rather tedious river valley.

Adit. Follow the left road which climbs to meet the Burrungubugge River upstream from the tunnel entrance.

The road crosses the river at a junction. (The left track can be used for a shorter return from Kidmans Hut if needed.) Keep on the road to the right; this follows a set of power lines for five kilometres to the valley of the Gungahlin River.

Don't cross the river as the road leads into private land; instead, turn off left following an old track north across the plains past Davies Hut to Campbells Creek. On the other side of the creek a more clearly defined track can then be followed north-west up Teddys Creek valley. This eventually leaves the creek and heads west into Brassy Gap. The track is disused but can still be clearly followed most of the way to the gap.

The view from Brassy Gap is excellent and worth the effort of

Burrungubugge River west. Some footpads help to avoid the worst scrub, particularly on the steep climb two kilometres west of the hut.

Past there the valley opens out into wide, grassy plains. Easy walking then

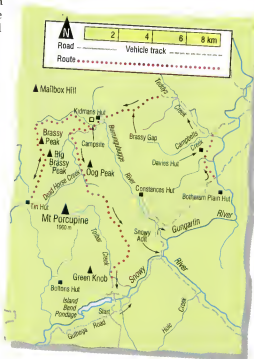
the valley of Dead Horse Creek upstream. This initially heads south-west and climbs to the open plains of Dead Horse Creek.

Follow the plains south beside the creek. They provide easy walking for three kilometres. When the valley divides keep to the left branch and climb gently south-east for one and a half kilometres into the saddle above the headwaters of Tolbar Creek.

Do not head down Tolbar Creek as it is very scrubby. The better route is to follow the crest of the ridge on the east which parallels Tolbar Creek. Most of this ridge provides easy walking through open plains or very light forest.

Keep to the crest of the ridge the entire way until it meets Tolbar Creek just upstream from the intake portal for the hydro-electricity scheme. In the lower parts the ridge has some scrubby and rocky sections but is still easier than the creek.

From the intake, follow the road back to Island Bend Pondage and the car. There are several roads and which one to follow will depend on where the car is parked. ■



A hand holding a Silva compass against a scenic background of a mountain and a river. The compass is a multi-functional tool with a circular dial, a ruler, and a protractor. The background features a large, rocky mountain peak partially shrouded in mist, with a lush green forest in the foreground and a calm river reflecting the scene.

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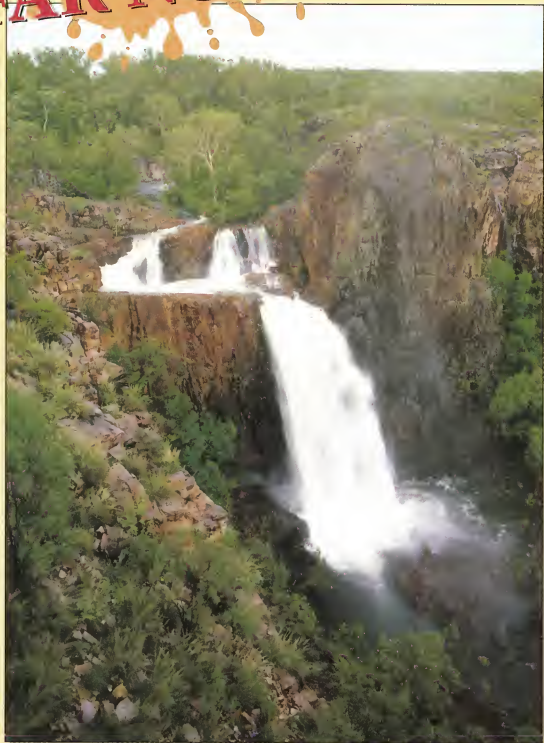
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WALKING AUSTRALIA'S FAR NORTH

*A Wild
feature on
two of our
hotter walks*



EDITH FALLS

Top End wilderness walking at its best, by Michael Fox

As Anna and I stood in the ranger's station at Nitmiluk in the Northern Territory, I was aware of just how far we were from my bushwalking birthplace of Tasmania. Talking to the ranger, I felt unprepared. Sure, I had my rucksack, my trusty Trangia stove and my beaten but not broken walking boots, but where was everything else? My four-season tunnel tent for those howling southerly gales; my mud-proof gaiters for plunging through hip-deep bog; and my hi-tech storm-proof jacket? These and other 'southern' bushwalking essentials were safely locked away in the car. What was in my pack? Well, apart from the obvious—food—there was a mosquito-net, groundsheet, sunburn cream and lots of water. This was to be walking with a difference.

Never having walked in the Top End of this arid country I was eager to gather as much information as possible. Chris, the head ranger at Nitmiluk, happily supplied us with some guide-lines. Despite it being early September there was still plenty of water in the main creeks and rivers, so he advised us to make them our walking goal each day. However, 'winter' (whatever that means up there) had ended and the weather was beginning to warm up. So avoid walking in the middle of the day, he insisted; early mornings and late evenings are best. Snakes, he said, will be well behaved as long as you give them plenty of warning. Walk as noisily as most bushwalkers are wont to do and they'll get out of your way.

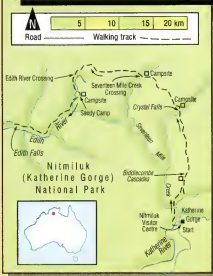
With these thoughts in mind we planned our walk from Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) to Edith Falls—a five-day, 65 kilometre haul up Seventeen Mile Creek, across the escarpment, and down the Edith River. Our friendly ranger had pointed out the best creeks and water-holes, so these would be our daily destinations. Of course, in fine bushwalking tradition, and being accomplished sloths, we immediately broke one of the guide-lines—the one about an early start. However, rolling out of the visitors' centre at 10 am I felt cool and relaxed. For the first few kilometres we travelled alongside the Katherine River. A fresh breeze blew the heavy scent of the flowering, silver-leaved paperbark across to us. The air was so laden with pollen that I mused we could have left our food behind as well. All we would have to do for nourishment was take deep breaths.



Walkers surveying the spectacular gorges below Crystal Falls. Russell Willis. Right, Michael Fox contemplating Sandy Camp before he realised that it was home to six freshwater crocodiles. Anna Povey. Page 57, falls on Seventeen Mile Creek after a storm. Willis

Before long we left the river to follow one of its many tributaries upstream. Passing underneath the shady canopy with the creek burbling beside us provided a great opportunity to explore the wonders of this new environment. One tree that immediately grabbed my attention was the giant-leaved Leichhardt. Flicking through my copy of Tim Low's *Wild Food Plants of Australia* we discovered that its fruit was mushy, bitter and not unlike a banana. Spying one lying on the ground I picked it up and sniffed cautiously. Hmmmm, smells good. Bigger sniff. Smells great! Its

Edith Falls area



fragrance—like a cross between a banana and a passion-fruit—seduced me into taking a bite. How could anything smelling this good possibly be bitter? I took the plunge. Chomp, chew, chew... aw yuk! Spit! It was like a grapefruit-juice concentrate. Someone had poisoned this delightful bush food with a bitter distillation of that despicable fruit which only health zealots can consume. Disbelievably, I foolishly tried another. No, it was worse! The experience was so disgusting that I refused to try any more. Disillusioned, we shouldered our packs and headed off making a mental note that the next time Tim Low said a fruit is bitter we'd be sure to take him at his word.

had to picture a map of Australia and where I was on it to remind me that this wasn't a dream.

After a few hours of weaving our way through dry, open eucalypt woodland we arrived at Biddlecombe Cascades. A series of small falls and pools awash with sparkling water greeted our salt-encrusted eyes. Quicker than Kathy Freeman can say 'Thanks for the gold medal' we downed our packs and immersed ourselves in water. Lolling around indolently we drank, swam and splashed in the miraculous liquid. There was oodles of it. We ate a leisurely lunch and lay back to contemplate the day. The only

Bushwalking heaven—forced to lie around in pools of clean, clear water with no one else about, just beautiful surroundings.



The next seven kilometres of the walk left the river valley and climbed up on to the escarpment. Once out of the shade of the trees we discovered why the ranger had said to walk early in the day. It was hot and dry. Back in the safety of suburbia it tends to slip our minds that Australia is an arid land. Not so much a land of occasional drought as a land of drought with occasional water. As we walked up the ridge on to the escarpment the trickle of sweat running down our backs seemed more like the raging torrents of the wet season. Frequent stops for a vital gulp of water gave us time to absorb the surroundings. The stillness and dryness of this rocky, red landscape were palpable. I found that I

sensible plan for the afternoon was to keep doing what we were doing. It was too hot for anything else. Bushwalking heaven—forced to lie around in pools of clean, clear water with no one else about, just beautiful surroundings.

Later, as the day cooled off, our sense of adventure returned and we began to explore above and below the falls and other nearby gorge systems. This was to be the pattern of the next four days. The mornings were spent walking to our next campsite, in the middle of the day we hung around the water, and during the late afternoon and evening we explored the area.

The next day we got on the track earlier. Even though the map notes said

that it was only nine kilometres to our next water stop at Crystal Falls, the memories of the previous day were still strong enough to prompt us to make an early start. This was just as well—they were the longest nine kilometres I have ever walked. Measured as the crow flies it turned out to be ten kilometres and we certainly weren't flying. Once again I discovered that 'the map is not the territory' and that sometimes you just

the evenings. No straggling about with twilight—suddenly it's dark. That day we aimed to walk along the escarpment to Seventeen Mile Creek Crossing, some 14 kilometres away. Once again our ideas about the distance were thrown into confusion by coming across the halfway marker 20 minutes from Crystal Falls. We walked through more open woodland, the dry green of eucalypts interrupted by the occasional bright-

The fourth day was the longest of the five we spent on the walk. We left the Seventeen Mile Creek water system and crossed over to the Edith River system. Once into the rhythm of early starts it seemed natural to be up at dawn preparing for a morning's walk. The nature of the country changed here; this was a cattle plain and the cattle's continued presence was evident. Their cloven-hooved tracks and huge cowpats contrast strongly with the small pads and desiccated scats of native animals. The vegetation also showed signs of cattle activity but the giant termite mounds so symbolic of the Top End seemed unaffected. We actually saw very few termite 'mounds'. Mound is a fairly dismissive term; like a mound of vegie scraps, it has a lowly image. What we saw instead were termite *spires*—tall, elegantly designed structures. Or termite *sculptures* of rounded, Rubenesque shapes. Only occasionally were there simple mounds. It seemed obvious to me that the mounds must be designed by termite accountants, the spires by architects, and the sculptures by the artists of the termite world.

After following the Edith River down to Sandy Camp, we settled in for an afternoon's leisure. Once again day switched suddenly into night. This time we found that we were the guests of six freshwater crocodiles. Their ruby-red eye-shine was quite disconcerting as they glided across the water and then disappeared beneath it. Camped as we were on the water's edge, I hoped that they would remember their place in the food-chain and not develop any of the aspirations of their more upwardly mobile estuarine cousins. I slept fitfully that night and awoke happy to see the dawn.

Walking to Edith Falls that morning we noticed the difference in the flora from Seventeen Mile Creek and that of the escarpment. More river gums, fewer kapoks. Pandanus sprouted everywhere, their fruit—the colour of glowing embers—alluringly out of reach. Purple-frilled fringe lilies waved at us from the edge of the track. They seemed to be saying 'So long, see you later'. I always feel a little melancholy at the end of a beautiful walk. We swam in every pool we came to in case it might be the last, trying to postpone the inevitable. Eventually the signs of other people became inescapable and when we rounded a corner there it was. Society. People in fresh clothes, stabbies and smokes in hand; screaming children. Glad that we had experienced five days of isolation in a beautiful country we walked out to the road, dependent once again on that society...if only for a lift back into town. ■

Michael Fox was, until recently, travelling around Australia sampling the best bushwalking, climbing and surfing the mainland has to offer. In his normal life he is a teacher of the Alexander Technique and his preferred home is Launceston.



Fox again, this time ingratiating himself with local termites. Povey

have to face reality and walk from start to finish.

It is on days like these that I really appreciate Anna's favourite pastime. Trudging along in my trance, wondering how much further we had to go, I was jerked back to the real world by her cry of, 'Gee, that's a wee Bill!' Quickly looking down I checked that my fly was done up. It was. 'What?', I asked. 'That bird over there, it's a weebill', she replied. 'Oh, good.' I relaxed, muttering about bloody bird-watchers, and put my pack down. I knew that she would be gone on an ornithological odyssey for a while, so I could sit and look around.

It's taken me a while, but I've finally worked out that the more slowly I walk, the more I see. If I walk faster I see more *quantitatively*—but it is more of the same. It takes time to stop, sit down, look at something more closely and think about it (or look it up in one of the books I carry). I can then walk on and view my world in a different way and my bushwalking becomes a learning process not just a spectator sport.

The next day we woke even earlier. The transition from dark to light is so sudden at these latitudes that one moment the stars are shining and the next it feels like midday. It is the same in

yellow kapok flower (which is an edible bush food). Lizards scampered through the rusty red kangaroo-grass, making rustling noises ahead of us. Even walking that early in the day it was warm, but comfortably so.

Spying a look-out on the map that said 'Good view March–August', we debated whether to go and have a look. Given that it was, after all, the second of September, I thought the odds were pretty good that the view would still be there—suspecting that it would be a big job to pack up a view and shift it that quickly. So we wandered over to the edge of the escarpment and, luckily, found the view still in place. We looked across the valley of Seventeen Mile Creek (or should it be 27.2 Kilometre Creek now that we are metric?) and up to Seventeen Mile Creek Falls. Sitting down for a moment we drank in the setting—the openness and scale of the country. Before long the heat of the sun reminded us that we'd rather be drinking in the falls, so we headed on.

Every campsite we had come to had been better than the last and Seventeen Mile Creek Crossing was exceptionally so. It had everything: a 30 metre waterfall, Aboriginal paintings, golden rocks, and honey-sweet grevillea. Everything. Except a loo. We had to walk, or run, the 100 metres you need to get away from a watercourse.

THE BIGGEST BANANA

Leanne Walker explores Mt Bartle Frere, Queensland's highest peak



Mt Bartle Frere (1622 metres) is a mountain of moods. Dominating the huge wilderness area of Bellenden Ker National Park, it is Queensland's highest mountain. Its brooding summit is often blanketed in billowing white or cloaked in ominous tropical storm-clouds. But on this particular morning it rose above our forest camp clear of cloud—a good omen for our two-day walk to the summit.

After packing up camp we dropped into the ranger's office to collect our camping permits for the track.

'It's a good forecast', the ranger said as he handed them over. He looked down dubiously at our bare legs. 'But watch out for the stinging gympie trees.'

The Mt Bartle Frere track begins at the Josephine Falls car-park close to the ranger's office. Here, we entered the green and whispering world of the tropical rain forest, our boots crunching the brittle leaf-litter that covers the forest floor. In these early stages of the walk the track is wide and clear and allows plenty of room to walk safely while looking about. Sunlight broke through gaps in the foliage and played across the forest floor with the brilliance of a searchlight beam, bringing forth the full, rich colours of mosses, lichens, fern fronds and fungi wherever it alighted.

Not long into the walk we had our first encounter with the stinging gympie tree. An evil-looking, raspberry-like

bush flanked the track for 20 metres. The gympie inflicts a nasty sting when it comes into contact with the skin and the discomfort can last for many months. With this in mind we stepped well clear.

After about an hour we arrived at Majuba Creek, where huge granite boulders—some the size of houses—tower over crystal-clear rock-pools. It was an ideal setting for a short breather, a top-up for the water-bottles and a handful of scroggin.

From Majuba Creek the track climbs west. Our surrounding world of deep, impenetrable forest seemed more chaotic than ever. Rampant and uncontrolled plants climb each other—strangling, pushing, competing for the light.

'Look at the intricacy of that strangler fig', I said to Andrew while pointing to a particularly fine specimen further up the track. Climbing on to a rotting log to frame a better shot with my camera, disaster struck. My feet slipped and I found myself mercilessly trapped in the grasp of a wait-a-while. Wait-a-while is an apt name for this vicious plant. It twines through the rain forest with a thick coat of needle-sharp barbs that snare the careless bushwalker. Removal is a slow process.



A reflective moment in Big Rock campsite before the final climb to the summit of Queensland. **Top**, Mt Bartle Frere 'floats' on the haze at dusk. *All photos Andrew Marshall*

'Great', I groaned. 'If the gypies don't get you, the wait-a-whiles will.' After painfully tearing the plant from my bare and bleeding legs, it took me a further 30 minutes to extract the remaining barb-tips from my wounds.

Pressing on, we gradually climbed higher. Our previously wide path became a scramble over logs and roots as we followed a narrow ridge towards the Big Rock campsite. Far below and to the right gurgled the Majuba Creek and to the left a wide valley was bathed in golden sunlight.

It took us nearly three hours to reach the Big Rock campsite from the Josephine Falls car-park. The camp is a clearing in the rain forest; a widening of the track alongside the Majuba Creek. Shrugging off our sweaty packs we noticed a tent already pitched. Two walkers, looking weary but victorious, made their way towards us from the opposite side of the creek.

'It was a tough one', one of them said as he began to dismantle the tent. 'One of the hardest things I've done in a while.' The two lads had chosen to make the climb to the summit of Mt Bartle Frere on the morning of their second day, leaving most of their gear at the camp. We intended to do the same.

At Big Rock the track divides. The left track leads to Broken Nose, a rocky knoll at 850 metres on the southern ridge of Mt Bartle Frere. It was now 2.30 pm and we reckoned there was enough time to



Leanne Walker on Mt Bartle Frere's 1622 metre summit. **Right**, getting there.

Mt Bartle Frere: the facts

While Mt Bartle Frere may only be an 18 kilometre return walk (not including the side-trip to Broken Nose) it's not to be underestimated—it's a good, long slog to the summit from the Big Rock campsite. The varying habitats one encounters moving from lowland to upland rain forest make it a 'must do' gem for bushwalkers exploring far north Queensland.

Flora and fauna

Upland rain forest has an astounding 500 species of trees. Some of the unusual creatures at 1500 metres and above include the leaf-tailed gecko, the Herbert River ring-tailed possum and the northern barred frog, as well as the Lumholtz tree-kangaroo that has rough foot-pads and long, curved claws to help it to climb and jump along branches.

When to visit

Winter (the dry season) is a good time to do the walk. The humidity is low although the nights can be pretty chilly. Spring is also suitable with the added bonus that the wild flowers will be out. Summer (the wet season) is when the humidity is at its highest and the conditions are hot and sticky. In autumn the air is often clear and provides fine views.

Maps

The topographic map *Bartle Frere* 1:100 000 is the only one available but does not show walking tracks. However, if you call into the ranger's office or write, he will provide you with the leaflet *Visitor Information to Bellenden Ker National Park* which does show the walking tracks.

Access

Mt Bartle Frere is situated about one hour (60 kilometres) south of Cairns. From the high-

way, turn right at the signpost for Josephine Falls and continue for eight kilometres to the car-park. This car-park is often surprisingly crowded and camping is not permitted here at present.

Permits

A permit must be obtained from the ranger's office which is attached to the ranger's house about 100 metres from the Josephine Falls car-park. Permits cost three dollars a person for one night. It's a good idea to check in with the ranger on your return. He will also give you details of the water situation, in particular whether water is available from Upper Camp. For further information, contact The Ranger, Bellenden Ker National Park, PO Box 93, Miriwini, Queensland 4871. Telephone (070) 67 6304.

The walk

One way is to walk to the Big Rock campsite on the first day. If you feel like it, you can also do the side-trip to Broken Nose. The following morning continue to the summit of Mt Bartle Frere and then return to the car-park the same day.

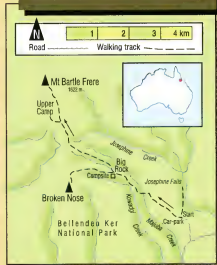
Alternatively, walk all the way to Upper Camp on the first day (seven kilometres). Camp the night and do the last kilometre or so to the summit the following morning and return to the bottom of the mountain that day. This can be done with or without the side-trip to Broken Nose.

It would also be possible to get up very early and walk all the way to the summit and return in a single day, but there isn't really much fun in busting a gut when you can take your time and look around at all there is to see. ■

make it up and back before nightfall—good training for the haul to the summit the next day.

In just over two hours we climbed out on to the granite proboscis of Broken Nose. To the left our gaze followed the ridge we had just climbed then picked

Mt Bartle Frere





Morning arrived crisp and cool. Mist lay suspended over the creek and from a nearby patch of ferns came the explosive call of an eastern whip-bird. The fire still smouldered from the night before and we coaxed it to life in a moment and boiled the billy.

Setting off for the summit we crossed Majuba Creek once again. Here the track takes a sudden turn with an almost vertical ladder consisting of roots extending skywards. There are several of these steep scrambles and we progressed about as fast as an asthmatic ant with some very heavy shopping. A good job that we were only carrying day packs containing our camera gear, a bird book and a little water and food!

Further down the track a giant brush mahogany literally stopped us in our tracks, its woody buttresses reaching down from head height like the knees of an elephant and sprawling out across the track into the forest. This towering, buttressed giant commanded our awe and respect and only by craning our necks right back could we gaze up into the lofty crown and marvel at its incredible age.

on his display perch in a dazzling flurry of golden-yellow, a strand of beard lichen hanging from his bill.

After three hours of steady climbing from the Big Rock campsite we emerged from the rain forest on to heathland dotted with clusters of granite boulders. Here we passed a signpost pointing west to water and the Upper Camp. It was midmorning, and the sun was already beating down like a hammer. Half blinded by sweat, we clambered up and over a jumble of massive granite blocks for a panoramic vista—the best of the entire walk.

The verdant greens of Mt Bartle Frere's jungle-covered slopes contrasted with the squares of sugar-cane and bananas at the mountain's base. Along the coast we could make out the Barrier Reef islands of Dunk, Barnard, Russell and High basking in the turquoise waters of the Coral Sea. It was truly a heady combination of sky, sea, coast and mountains.

After such a view the summit came as an anticlimax—a small opening in a stunted thicket of scrub and a dead tree festooned with name-plates, some dating



out, way down below, the ranger's office, sugar-cane fields and banana plantations.

Nightfall is swift in the far north. Stiff and weary, we retired to our tent only to find that we had zipped in the obligatory mozzie. Thirty annoying minutes were then spent tracing its sickening whine before it could be extinguished. Bliss is a Therm-a-Rest; it's heaven to be horizontal!

As the altitude increased there was a change in vegetation and animal species. The rain forest through which we were climbing is part of the single largest tract of upland rain forest left in Australia. It has grown, uninterrupted, for the past 140 million years since Australia was still part of Gondwanaland. We met our first upland inhabitant in the low, scrubby forest at about 1200 metres. A male golden bower-bird landed silently

back to the 1950s. We climbed on to a rock. We'd made it to the roof of Queens-land.

Some four-and-a-half hours later in the Josephine Falls car-park we gazed back up at the 'mountain of moods'. The clouds had begun to close in on Mt Bartle Frere once again. ■

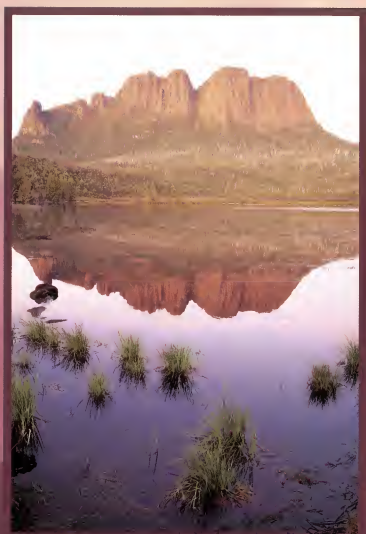
Leanne Walker is a writer. Her favourite hobbies include bushwalking, sailing and botany.



HIGH POINTS OF TASMANIA

Some of Australia's wildest peaks, by *Rob Blakers*





Eldon Bluff. **Main photo**, Precipitous Bluff. All photos were taken in Tasmania.





Pencil pine forest, Central Plateau.
Left, the Mt Anne massif.

Rob Blakers lives in Hobart and is enamoured of the fragile, beautiful, wet wilderness of western Tasmania. His photographs have appeared in many publications including his own calendars, cards and books.



SKIING FROM MT COBBLER TO THE

Victoria's most spectacular ski tour, by Glenn van der Knijff

In Track Notes in *Wild* no 49 Colin Sutherland described New South Wales's (and Australia's) premier ski tour—the Kiandra to Mt Kosciuszko crossing. The obvious choice for Victoria's classic ski tour is the Mt Hotham to Mt Bogong crossing, traversing the Bogong High Plains *en route*. However, Victoria's most scenic—and demanding—ski tour is probably the ridgetop traverse between Mt Cobbler and the Bluff which covers a distance of more than 50 kilometres. Along the way ascents of Mts Koonika, Speculation, Buggery, Howitt, Magdala and Lovick are made and King Billy No 1 can be climbed on a short side-trip. In the summer months this region is one of Victoria's finest walking areas. For almost its entire length the tour follows a prominent ridge (very narrow in places) which in the middle section forms the Great Dividing Range. Snow-plains are few and far between. The terrain ensures that this is a journey of about a week's duration for experienced cross-country skiers only.

In fine weather, navigation is easy—the route along the ridgetop is generally obvious. When foggy, however, navigation becomes difficult. If fine weather prevails you will be rewarded for your efforts with views of the rugged ramparts of some of Victoria's most spectacular peaks.

Warning

Most of the tracks in this region will be invisible under the snow and in foggy conditions finding the route will be difficult. It is therefore essential that at least one member of the party has walked the entire route in the summer months. This person should also be competent in navigation with a map and compass—a GPS receiver could be extremely handy.

The party should also carry a suitable first aid kit and have at least one member knowledgeable in first aid in case of an emergency. Once you've started the tour, help is at least two days away should a serious injury occur, so a mobile phone or a CB receiver is an invaluable accessory. (The party of which I was a part some years ago carried a CB and while it was not needed it provided peace of mind.)

This trip is nothing like touring on the Bogong High Plains—there are few flat sections, many climbs and descents and rocky clifflines accompany the entire trip. The tour demands that all participants be reasonably fit, competent at skiing up and down hills, and experienced snow-campers.

When to go

August and early September are the most reliable times to undertake this trip. The snow cover in June is extremely unreliable and in July the weather is often poor and the snow depth in the lower areas insubstantial. The best idea is to plan for an August/September

trip and keep a close eye and ear on the snow reports. When the skiing is good at Mt Buller, Mt Stirling and Lake Mountain it is a safe bet that the snow cover over the route will be adequate.

Maps

The Vicmap 1:50 000 sheet *Howitt-Selwyn* and the Natmap 1:100 000 *Howitt* sheet cover most of the trip while the 1:25 000 sheet *Buller South* covers the western section of the route over the Bluff. Other useful references are John Siseman's book *Wonnangatta-Moroka National Park* and the Algonia Publications guide *Ski Touring Australia*.

Access

From Melbourne, follow the main highway to Mansfield. On the east side of the town, take a minor road to Whitfield. (Whitfield can also be reached by a sealed road from Wangaratta if you're coming from the north.) From the town, drive south through Cheshunt on the road that leads to Dandongadale. After about 18 kilometres turn right at an intersection and follow a dirt road as it heads up the valley of the Rose River, crosses a spur at Wild Horse Gap, descends to the Dandongadale River and follows it upstream to a bridge. In dry weather it may be possible for conventional two-wheel-drive vehicles to continue driving very steeply up to Cobbler Lake; otherwise, leave your vehicle here and walk six kilometres to the lake.

The end-point of the trip is reached by following the Mt Buller road east from Mansfield, then turning right on to the Howqua Track shortly after Merrijig. This leads over a ridge and down to Sheepyard Flat, then winds along the Howqua River for some distance before climbing to Eight Mile Gap. Take the left-hand track—the Bluff Link Road—for five kilometres to a small car-park on the right where the walking track to the Bluff starts. Between Eight Mile Gap and the car-park you'll probably encounter the first snow. If the snow is deep, you may not reach the car-park in a two-wheel-drive vehicle. There is a large clearing at Refrigerator Gap (about one kilometre before the car-park) where cars can be left. Otherwise, park at any suitable spot along the side of the road, making sure that you leave adequate room for other vehicles to pass. If you are planning a car shuttle, be prepared for a lot of driving—it is about a three-hour return trip from Mansfield to the car-park below the Bluff. If possible, it is better to arrange to be dropped off at the start and picked up at the end, thus removing the need for a very lengthy car shuttle.

Cobbler Lake to Mt Cobbler. At a height of 1100 metres, Cobbler Lake is usually at or just below the winter snow-line. Generally, you can expect to walk for 30 minutes or an hour before snow suitable for skiing is reached.

From the lake, take the walking track that leads west into the forest about 100 metres south of the hut. The track rises gently at first, then descends to a small gorge. After crossing a creek on a log bridge, the track rises. As the snow deepens the track will become less obvious. However, the skiing here is easy as the route ascends a vague spur to the west. Occasional markers on trees will indicate the position of the track. Higher up the forest becomes more open and the route levels out as the main ridgeline between Mt Cobbler and Mt Speculation is met. At this point, turn right and follow the ridge in a northerly direction. It soon rises at a moderate grade until the tree-line is reached. From here the Mt Cobbler summit (1628 m) is close at hand. Ascend the open slope. The main summit is reached by an interesting scramble, without skis, from this point.

Mt Cobbler to Mt Speculation. From the summit, follow your track back down the ridge. Continue heading roughly south past the point where the route from Cobbler Lake joins the ridge and continue over a couple of knolls. After the highest knoll, the ridge turns south-east and becomes quite broad. Locating the exact route is not easy here, but ski roughly south-east keeping a few hundred metres east of the main ridgeline. After about 1.5 kilometres you'll cross a four-wheel-drive track (you should be able to make out its form under the snow cover). This is the lowest point on the trip (1330 m) between Mt Cobbler and the Bluff. Follow this track south and you'll soon come to a three-way track junction. The right branch descends to the King River. Follow the left-hand track—the Speculation Road—for about four kilometres to a point where the track passes close to the ridge at a deep saddle. Leave the vehicle track here, climb on to the ridge and follow it (steeply at first) through open forest to the summit of Mt Koonika (1594 m). The narrow ridge descends gently south-east from the summit to a saddle before climbing through increasingly open snow gums to the attractive peak of Mt Speculation (1688 m). The first decent XCD slopes of the trip are on the south face of Mt Speculation. At the top all the country traversed thus far (and that still to be crossed) is visible, as are the high peaks of the Bogong alpine area to the north-east.

Mt Speculation to Mt Howitt. From the summit, the route of the Alpine Walking Track is followed south-west, negotiating a few rocky bluffs along the way. (The initial section from the summit could be quite treacherous in icy conditions.) Continue descending, steeply at times, to Horrible Gap

The Crosscut Saw is the most exciting—and potentially the most dangerous—section of the described tour. (Mt Speculation behind.) Both photos Glenn van der Knijff

BLUFF





where a steep 200 metre climb to the tree-covered summit of Mt Buggery (1600 m) begins. Drop down the far (south) side to a saddle. The exciting Crosscut Saw is the next main objective. From the saddle, do not follow the narrow, tree-covered ridge. Instead, sidle just below the west side of the ridgeline for about 500 metres before rejoining the ridge where it begins to climb steeply. It will probably be necessary that you carry your skis intermittently from this point as a number of short but steep climbs beckon. Eventually you'll emerge from the trees and ascend a large knoll. The next few kilometres could be the most dangerous of the entire trip if the snow or weather conditions are severe—there are no trees for shelter along this section.

From the knoll, descend to a saddle before climbing to the highest 'tooth' of the Crosscut

Saw (1705 m). Walk or ski over a few more teeth before sidling to the east of another large knoll and into a saddle (and the end of the Crosscut Saw). One more brief climb to the east will bring you on to the summit plateau of Mt Howitt—beware of the very steep drop along the northern slope of the plateau. Where the ridge broadens and flattens, bear south then south-west to the summit of Mt Howitt (1742 m); do not follow the narrow, tree-covered ridge east to Macalister Springs and Vallejo Gantner Hut unless you're planning a visit there.

Mt Howitt to Bluff Hut. The summit plateau of Mt Howitt is very broad and except for a handful of old snow-poles in a bad state of repair, there are few major landmarks found here. Between the end of the Crosscut Saw and Big Hill navigation will be difficult in inclement weather.

From the summit of Mt Howitt, ski south-west for about 300 metres, then south to locate the spur that leads to Big Hill. This spur is not obvious until you're almost in the saddle between Mt Howitt and Big Hill. Climb south-west to the top of Big Hill (1658 m), then sidle downhill just below the ridgeline to another saddle. The route continues to sidle—this time to the north of another minor peak—to reach a long saddle at the base of Mt Magdala. The summit of Mt Magdala (1725 m) is one kilometre to the west and necessitates a climb of 200 metres. Just before reaching the summit you'll pass the strange formation of Hells Window—a large gash in the ridge (see *Wild Shot in Wild* no 45). In foggy conditions be careful not to follow the prominent spur which leads south from the top and stay well clear of the major cliffline which forms the northern face of the mountain. Descend



The track heads roughly south from the hut round a small gully, then climbs steadily to the broad top of Mt Lovick (1684 m). Do not follow a side track that turns left from the main track shortly after the small gully. Above the tree-line the track will probably not be visible and your navigational skills may be called into action to cross the broad summit. One kilometre west of the summit the track should become obvious as it enters the trees. Follow it as it traces the ridgeline to Bluff Hut.

Bluff Hut to the car-park. There are two alternative ways to reach the end of the trip. The quicker and easier one is to follow the Bluff Link Road—which initially descends north-west from the hut—to a gate before turning left at an intersection and sidling the slopes well below the cliffs above to the car-park beneath the Bluff. The car-park is about six kilometres from Bluff Hut.

In fine weather it is a delightful ski to the Bluff. Ascend steadily west-south-west from the hut where the track soon emerges from the trees. You can sidle the open snow-slope below the top of the so-called 'Mt Eadley Stoney' (1684 m) to the Blowhole (a major saddle before the final climb to the Bluff) but it is much more scenic to follow the ridge over the summit. Continue from the Blowhole west-south-west for almost two kilometres to the Bluff (1725 m).

The route down to the car-park is not obvious unless you know where to look. It starts about 300 metres west of the summit cairn and descends very steeply north-west, negotiating a number of rocky bluffs along the way. Skis will have to be carried as you descend, and lowered in front of you at the difficult sections. Pack-hauling may also be necessary. The most difficult section only lasts for a few hundred metres; thereafter, the gradient gradually eases as the route continues steadily downhill along a track indicated by an occasional route-marker. The route keeps about 100 metres west of a small creek as it descends from the base of the cliffs. When the track flattens out, you're near the car-park. Ski down the Bluff Link Road from the car-park if your car is parked further down the road.

Glenn van der Knijff is a keen bushwalker, cross-country skier and alpine historian. A qualified cartographer, he worked for Victorian map and guidebook publisher Algonia Publications before joining the staff at Wild in 1988.

Campsite on Mt Cobbler with views of the Razor, and the Viking (behind) looming beyond.

steeply west from the summit and the ridge soon becomes less steep and more prominent. Follow the ridge as it swings south, then turns west into a saddle. As you climb steadily south-west from the saddle the ridge becomes less obvious until you reach a broad ridgeline north of King Billy No 1 (1710 m), which can easily be climbed from here. Turn north and follow the Bluff Track as it descends to Lovicks Hut. If the track is not obvious, follow the ridge to a saddle just east of Picture Point. The track sides the southern side of Picture Point to rejoin the ridge 500 metres west of it. Eight hundred metres further west the track turns to the south and descends to Lovicks Hut.



ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT FAGEL, PHOTO BY CLAREN VAN DER BOUT



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B

OOTHS FOR SKI TOURING AND XCD

Getting a toe in, with *Monica Perrymeant*

If you're as old as I am you'll easily remember the song 'Where have all the flowers gone?'. The same might well be asked of cross-country ski gear.

There has been a steady decline in the availability of brands and models in Australia over the past few years. The sales volume was never sufficient to attract brand continuity or wholesaler loyalty. Traditionally, manufacturers have not seen Australia as a serious market, particularly in the touring and XCD fields. Hence brands have appeared, disappeared and reappeared at various times and often in the hands of different importers or wholesalers.

As well as this, in recent years many retailers have either opted out of stocking ski gear or significantly reduced their ranges. There are exceptions, of course, but many have found that the margins are too small to justify holding stock and that's no doubt one of the reasons why we see huge discounts at end-of-season sales. While everyone loves a bargain, if the shops don't make profits they'll stop stocking the very gear we want to buy. I've often been told by retailers that they can get better margins on other outdoor gear and that, unlike ski equipment, most other gear sells all year round.

What does this mean for the skier seeking a new pair of touring or XCD boots this season? Well, don't despair! There's still plenty out there to choose from. And it may well be that fewer brands and fewer models end up making your choice easier!

One advantage of having a reduced range is that the brands currently available are well supported because they have an increased share of the small Australian market. We may have lost a few good brands over the years but what remains is all good-quality gear.

Another is that in addition to the large buying groups and chains that stock ski equipment, the shake-up in the industry has resulted in specific shops concentrating on certain sectors of the market. Those offering ski gear have developed strong reputations as professional specialists. Staff in these retail outlets know the brands and models they stock very well and can offer professional, accurate advice.

But a word of warning—if you have a particular item in mind, consider buying it now rather than waiting around on the off chance that it'll come down in price. You are likely to be disappointed.

This survey covers the range of ski boots at present widely available in Australia which are suitable for anything from general ski touring to lift-served XCD skiing and Telemark racing. Inclusion or omission of any brand is not an indication of quality or suitability but merely of availability.

All models have been rated according to their suitability for different types of cross-country skiing. These ratings are subjective and are based on a combination of information from manufacturers and retailers, and the opinions gleaned from a

Bad frostbite or even worse foot hygiene?
Matt Darby

Points to watch

Match the boot to the binding and ski

Heavy boots require heavy-duty bindings. Don't skimp on light ones as you might well rip them off the ski. Also, ensure that the skis you select are strong enough to cope with the forces heavy boots exert.

Which binding system?

The NNN BC system is best suited to lighter XCD skiing. For heavy touring and racing use a heavy-duty 75 mm binding.

Release bindings

Don't forget to allow for the cost of some release bindings if you intend to ski hard and fast. They'll add a bit of weight but are better than an injury. Make sure that you are shown how to set the bindings properly and don't be tempted to crank them up too hard.

Safety straps

Ski braking devices are required by law when skiing on lift-served slopes. The cheapest available is the simple safety strap. Braking devices should also be used on back-country ski trips where loss of a ski could be serious.

Upper material

The introduction of plastic uppers in XCD boots over the past few years may revolutionise the industry. Plastic has great water-repency, is very durable and will hold its shape. This means, of course, that it won't stretch and can take a long time to break in so, if buying plastic boots,

make sure that they fit well in the first place. Leather is a tried and true material for boots. Current technology has significantly improved its water-repency and leather will stretch and mould comfortably to your feet. If buying leather boots, it's a good idea to wear them in a bit before you go touring. Try putting them on while they're very wet and walk around at home until they dry and mould to your feet.

Sole thickness at the toe

It's important to check this as some boots may be too thick to fit into the binding at present on your skis.

Closure system

Buckles and power straps make the task of tightening boots much easier, especially when your fingers are half-frozen.

Snugginess of fit

Be sure that the boot fits you snugly in the heel area. Put your foot up and down to simulate striding/walking and don't buy the boots if your heel slides up and down as this is the major cause of blisters.

Professional instruction

Remember that gear alone won't make you a good XCD skier. You also have to invest some time and money in having some professional instruction. It will probably reduce the chances of injury and, at the very least, make you look better as you try to link turns under the chair-lift line! ■



Cumbersome as our gear may have been, we did have a lot more manoeuvrability than the Kiandra miners of the 1860s and 1870s. They skied on simple bent-up palings with a toe-strap and not much more. If you tried too hard you usually came a cropper. The single pole helped one's balance but was most useful as a sit-on brake down a steep hill. Special shoes were unheard of; you just stepped on to the planks in your well-worn, knee-high, leather moleskins.

Klaus Hueneker

What they're wearing

Have you ever wondered which boots are the old-time favourites of some of Australia's best known cross-country skiers?

Andrew Barnes

A well-known Mt Hotham photographer and steep-slope virtuoso, Andrew loves the versatility of his old leather Scarpa Nero boots. Recently he's skied in Scarpa T2s and thinks they're great boots too but unfortunately they are too wide a fitting for him. Put those feet of yours on a diet of cream cakes and chocolate to fatten them up, Andrew!

Neville Byrne

Neville is known to many for his service to both the Ski Touring Association of Victoria and the Ski Touring Leadership Certificate course and says that his all-time favourite boots for XCD skiing are a pair of eight-year-old Scarpas—he doesn't know or care about the model. They still give him good support. When out general touring and even snow-camping, though, he swears by his lightweight Alpina NNN BC boots. Nifty Nev believes that people who do a variety of skiing tend to be able to get by with less extreme boots.

Phil Carter

Phil owns one of Melbourne's leading cross-country ski retail shops. When he's not recovering from injuries, he's out skiing in his favourite pair of Merrell Legends. He's stocked them for rental for years and says they wear well and are a good fit for most people.

Phil Coleman

Seen most weekends skiing anywhere there's a ski tow, Phil loves his old Asolo boots which date back to the days when they were the only ones available. He says they're great for resort skiing because they fit snugly and handle most situations. He also uses Alpina NNN BC boots for touring because there's no heel movement, they keep the water out and snow doesn't ball up under the bindings. Phil's motto is so long as you ski in control and have fun, it doesn't matter what gear you use.

Keith Jeffcott

A ski instructor and national co-ordinator of the National Coaching and Instruction Scheme, Keith favours an old, soft pair of Asolos. He, too, doesn't know or care what model they are. Recently he tried some Alpina NNN BC boots in the deep powder snow of Hokkaido, Japan, and feels that they performed credibly because the light, fresh snow didn't pressure the binding system greatly. He's not too keen on this system for hard pack, however.

Philippa Lohmeyer

Philippa, chairperson of the STLC course committee and an avid steep-slope skier, vows and declares that her Asolo Extremes are the best thing since sliced bread. She doesn't like plastic boots and prefers a lace-up closure system and that 'ol leather'.

Peter Mack

Peter is a long-time Australian Men's Telemark champion and well-known Mt Hotham ski instructor. He prefers an over-the-ankle boot to help prevent ankle injuries and a buckle closure system for convenience. When asked which boots he likes best, he gave me a list as long as my arm including the Alico Blaze, Alico Edge, Asolo Extreme Plus, Asolo Racer and Asolo Ultimate. Peter, don't let anyone ever call you a gear freak!

Sarah Nicholas

The current Australian Women's Telemark champion and a professional ski patroller, Sarah says that her favourite boot is the Asolo Ultimate, for everything from bumps to racing to touring. She likes its high cut and compensates for its very upright cut by adding spoilers to adjust the forward lean.

Andrew Ramsey

President of Skiing Australia (formerly the Australian Ski Federation), and an avid Telemark racer, Andrew loves his old pair of Merrell double boots as well as his Asolo Extreme Pros. He was about to launch into the world of the 'plastic fantasies' last season when Andrew Barnes appropriated the only pair available for miniature feet. He's hoping the second generation of these boots will be even better and, on his lowly barrister's salary, has been saving hard to buy some!

Monica Perrymeant

Lastly, my own preferences. I enjoyed skiing for many years on an old, sloppy pair of Asolo Snowfields and cried when the abuse dished out to them finally caused their untimely death! Happily, though, after trying many other boots, I'm now very contented with my pair of Arkos Greenlands which fit like a glove. However, I'd love to see Scarpa make a T3 or perhaps a T4 for people like me! ■

variety of experienced skiers. We have used bullets to rate the boots. The higher the number of bullets, the more suitable the boot is considered for that particular type of skiing.

General touring includes day trips and overnight ski touring involving a significant proportion of off-track skiing much of which is through gentle terrain. Places like the Bogong High Plains and the Mt Jagungal area would fit into this category. This type of skiing is best done in lighter boots which allow a greater degree of flexibility when striding or climbing hills. The Alpina range of boots is preferred by many as these boots combine lightweight plastic with a high level of water-resistance and the excellent control afforded by the NNN BC binding system. Traditionalists are likely to stick with a lower cut leather boot utilising the 75 millimetre binding system. All the leather boots surveyed have been treated with waterproofing agents and have good torsional rigidity. They also feature rubber soles, which provide better grip than pebax (plastic) for walking on snow and icy surfaces.

Heavy back-country touring includes day and overnight trips involving lots of steep slopes. Such places as Mt Bogong, Mt Feather-top or Carruthers Peak come to mind. But opinions will differ greatly here. Some people

will argue that a very heavy, stiff, high cut boot will give the best performance on the downhill while others will be more concerned with the added weight and possible discomfort on the long walk or ski in. A good compromise would be a boot such as the Arkos Greenland which combines good control with a very comfortable, padded neoprene cuff. Another option is the Scarpa T2 with the high level of water-resistance, durability and stiffness that a plastic boot provides. Removable inner boots should also be considered as they can double as bivvy boots which can be a real bonus in the back country.

Lift-serviced skiing has different requirements again. A higher boot will give greater ski edge control. Weight becomes less of a consideration and a stiffer, high-cut boot such as the Alico Blaze, Merrell Super Comp or Scarpa's T2 may be a good choice. Closure systems incorporating buckles and 'power straps' will provide excellent control as will hinged plastic cuffs. It is important to remember here that while heavier, stiffer boots might appear to give you added control, they will not, in themselves, improve your technique. Anyone who's watched the likes of Peter Mack or Keith Jeffcott hoisting down steep slopes wearing lightweight track

boots will know that! You'll need a lot of professional instruction to emulate their style. To avoid lower-leg injuries, it is better to learn on lighter gear and then transfer that knowledge on to heavier gear when you have become more experienced.

Telmark racing is a very specialised field. The Alico Blaze, Merrell Super Comp and Scarpa Terminator fit this category. All are extremely rigid and feature a combination of buckles and laces which helps to minimise movement of the foot inside the boot. Some have an additional 'power strap' for extra control. This year's range of Scarpa boots utilises a softer plastic on the upper for greater comfort and ease when touring. Remember to use release bindings when skiing on such heavy gear. Get in early if you want this type of boot as not many are brought into the country each season.

All the above information and the accompanying table should assist you when buying new boots this season. Remember to seek additional advice from professional staff in a specialist shop. ■

Monica Perryman has been actively involved in a wide variety of outdoor pursuits for the last 15 years. She has succeeded in combining her love of adventure with her passion for travel and now runs her own business organising exhibitions for the outdoor industry.

Wild Gear Survey Boots for ski touring and XCD

| Sole material | Sole thickness at foot, millimetres | Upper material | Binding system | Closure system | Sizes | Weight | Height | Inner boot | Hinged plastic cuff | Suitability for | | | | Comments | Approx price, \$ |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| | | | | | | | | | | General touring | Heavy back-country touring | Lift-serviced skiing | Telmark racing | | |
| Alico Italy Back Country Mountain Ski Super Telmark Blaze | Rubber | 17 | Full-grain leather | 75 mm | Laces | 36-47 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | N | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● | nr | nr | All Alico lasts suit narrower foot | 275 |
| | Rubber | 20 | As above | 75 mm | Laces | 36-48 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | N | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● | nr | nr | | 290 |
| | Rubber | 20 | One-piece antibio leather | 75 mm | Laces | 36-47 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | N | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | | 375 |
| | Rubber | 20 | Full-grain leather | 75 mm | Laces and two buckles | 36-47 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | N | nr | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | | 469 |
| Alpina Slovenia BC 1500 BC 2000 BC 5000 | Rubber | na | Full-grain leather | NNN BC | Laces | 36-49 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | N | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● | nr | nr | Kevlar rand reinforcement | 231 |
| | Pebax | na | Plastic moulded heel shell, leather upper | NNN BC | Laces and one buckle | 36-47 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | Y | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● | ● ● | nr | As above | 265 |
| | Pebax | na | Plastic moulded heel shell, one-piece leather upper | NNN BC | Three buckles, laces and 'power strap' | 37-47 | ● ● ● ● ● | Y | Y | nr | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● | nr | As above | 405 |
| Arkos Italy Comet Zenith | Rubber | 12 | Full-grain leather | 75 mm | Laces | 6-15 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | N | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● | nr | nr | Aiko women's sizes 3-9 | 289 |
| | Rubber | 14 | As above | 75 mm | Laces and one buckle | 3-15 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | N | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● | ● ● | nr | | 349 |
| | Rubber | 14 | As above | 75 mm | Laces and two buckles | 4-14 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | N | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | Neoprene/Lycra cuff | 389 |
| Merrell Italy Vertice Legend FTS Rush Super Comp | Pebax | na | Leather | NNN BC | Laces | 5-13 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | N | ● ● ● ● ● | nr | nr | nr | Also in women's sizes. This boot is made in Korea | 179 |
| | Rubber | 18 | Full-grain leather | 75 mm | Laces | 5-14 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | N | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | nr | Also in women's sizes | 349 |
| | Rubber | 19 | As above | 75 mm | Laces | 7-13 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | N | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | nr | | 416 |
| | Rubber | 19 | As above | 75 mm | Three buckles and one strap | 7-13 | ● ● ● ● ● | Y | Y | nr | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | | 559 |
| Scarpa Italy Wancho T2 | Rubber | 16 | Antibio leather | 75 mm | Laces | 6-12 | ● ● ● ● ● | N | N | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | nr | New for this season | 329 |
| | Rubber | 20 | One-piece injection moulded plastic | 75 mm | Laces on inner boot, two buckles on outer boot | 6-12 | ● ● ● ● ● | Y | Y | nr | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | Adjustable forward lean mechanism | 579 |
| Terminator | Rubber | 20 | As above | 75 mm | Laces on inner boot, two buckles and one 'power strap' on outer boot | 6-12 | ● ● ● ● ● | Y | Y | nr | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● | Release bindings should be considered | 599 |

● lightest ● lowest ● poor ● average ● good ● ● ● ● ● excellent na information not available nr not recommended

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SPORT SANDALS

Skipping the light fantastic—a *Wild* survey

Remarkably few walkers carry any kind of spare footwear, but a pair of slippers, light shoes or sandals are well worth their weight in the pack. On arrival at camp at night and before leaving in the morning a light type of footwear is very comfortable. Slippers are quite suitable to wear about the camp, but a type of sandal is obtainable which possesses a thick sole and is strapped to the foot. A pair of this type, in addition to packing easily, can be worn to walk in should the necessity arise. I walked in a pair from Fry's on the Howqua River to Merrig, when a bruised heel made walking in boots painful.

Harry Stephenson, 1939

Just over a decade ago the problem of comfortable and rugged water-sport footwear was solved with the introduction of sport sandals. Today the sport sandal revolution is in full swing as more and more people discover the advantages of footwear which can be used for running, walking, scrambling and swimming.

The suitability for column in the accompanying table is divided into bushwalking, scrambling and water sports. Some sandals are designed to encompass all these activities,

but the old adage 'jack of all trades, master of none' will usually apply. The sizes have in some cases been converted into metric equivalents from either USA or UK sizes. During the course of this survey it became clear that some manufacturers had major discrepancies in sizing conversions indicated on their boxes. The answer is to try before you buy.

Most sandals have varying amounts of arch support which is especially valuable if you pronate or for high arches. The ratings given are for the degree of contouring and, because we all have feet of different shapes, in no way relate to the comfort provided. Every manufacturer uses a form of rubber compound as its sole material and then usually gives it a hype-sounding trade name to confuse us all. The type of rubber is that which is given by the manufacturer and is listed without such trade names.

There are many types of strap material(s) used to secure the foot. Most sandals use tubular webbing, which is not only

Sportclimbing sandals? (Lucy Creamer, UK, on This is Not Our Land, 20, Mt Buffalo, Victoria.) Glenn Tempest



Wild Equipment Survey Sport sandals

| | Suitability for Bushwalking? | Scrambling? | Water sport? | Sizes | Arch support | Sole material | Strap material(s) | Strap attachment | Fastening method | Ease of putting on | Fit | Comments | Approx. price, \$ |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Chaco USA Tokay | ●● | ●● | ●●●● | 37-47 | ●● | Rubber | Tubular nylon webbing | W | Buckle | ●●●● | ●●●● | Infinitely adjustable straps | 125 |
| Z/1 | ●●● | ●● | ●●●● | 38-46 | ●●●● | Rubber | As above | W | Buckle | ●●●● | ●●● | As above. Women's version available | 130 |
| Class 5 China Allsport | ●●● | ●● | ●● | 32-46 | ●● | Recycled rubber | Synthetic Durabuck | B | Hook-and-loop | ●● | ●● | Abrasion-proof toe-guard | 50 |
| Aztec | ●● | ●● | ●●● | 34-46 | ●● | As above | Tubular nylon webbing | As above and buckle | As above and buckle | ●● | ●● | As above | 50 |
| Hi-Tec China Whitewater | ●● | ●●● | ●● | 37-46 | ●●● | Carbon rubber | Synthetic Durabuck | B | Hook-and-loop | ●● | ●● | | 60 |
| Merrill Korea Montana | ●●● | ●● | ●● | 36-50 | ●● | Rubber | Tubular nylon webbing | B | Hook-and-loop | ●● | ●● | | 85 |
| Moika | na | na | na | 36-50 | na | Rubber | Synthetic leather | B | As above | na | na | | 130 |
| Narizalia | ● | ●● | ●●●● | 36-50 | ●●● | Rubber | As above and neoprene | B | Buckle | ●●● | ●●●● | Provides ankle support | 160 |
| Nike Thailand Solway | ● | ● | ●●● | 36-47 | ● | Sticky rubber | Synthetic leather and neoprene | B | None | ●●●● | ●●● | Unique step-in construction | 90 |
| Air Deschultz | ● | ● | ●●● | 36-47 | ●● | High-traction rubber | Synthetic leather | B | Hook-and-loop | ●● | ●● | Air sole cushioning | 100 |
| Air Nahalem | ● | ●● | ●●●● | 36-47 | ●●● | Sticky rubber | Neoprene and nylon webbing | B | As above | ●●● | ●●●● | As above | 140 |
| Source Israel Trek | ●● | ● | ●● | 36-46 | ●● | High-density rubber | Tubular polypropylene webbing | B | Hook-and-loop | ●● | ●●● | Comes with carrying/storage bag | 95 |
| Stream | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | 36-46 | ●● | Vulcanised rubber | As above | B | As above | ●● | ●●●● | As above | 130 |
| Teva China All Terrain | ●● | ●● | ●● | 34-46 | ●● | Neoprene crepe rubber | Tubular nylon webbing | W | Hook-and-loop | ●● | ●● | Women's version available | 75 |
| Softrock | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | 36-47 | ●●●● | Partially recycled compressed rubber | As above | W | As above | ●● | ●●● | | 100 |
| Terrastudy | ●●●● | ●●● | ●● | 36-47 | ●● | As above | As above | W | As above | ●● | ●●●● | Air cushion construction | 125 |
| Sandshoe | ●●●● | ●●● | ●●● | 36-47 | ●● | As above | Tubular polyester webbing | W | As above | ●● | ●●●● | Ankle support and extra protection | 150 |

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent B braked W wrap-around na information not available



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strong but is less abrasive on the skin than flat webbing. The strap attachment to the sandal falls into two categories. When the same strap runs all the way through between the midsole and the foot-bed it is termed a continuous wrap-around construction. In some cases the design of the sandal and the way the strap enters into the top sole doesn't allow for continuous wrap-around construction and instead the strap must be bonded. While it stands to reason that a continuous strap would be the strongest form of construction, the vast majority of manufacturers simply bond the strap firmly into place, with (usually) excellent results. Hook-and-loop or touch tape (more commonly known by its trade name Velcro) is a quick and efficient fastening method ideal for bushwalking applications but is susceptible to separation during prolonged periods in mud and water. A buckle which is easy to adjust is the best choice for most water sports.

The ease of putting on a sport sandal is usually determined by the number of hook-and-loop tabs or buckles that have to be done up. The fit of a sport sandal is its ability to hold the foot snugly and without any unwanted movement during use. This will obviously depend on the shape of the foot it is to accommodate. The ratings given are based not only on my own tests but on the comments of friends and of the sales-people in stores which sell the product. In the end it will be up to you to decide which model best fits your foot. So, go ahead, put your foot in it, again!

Glenn Tempest

TRIX

The ski cup

How to drink and ski, by Stephen Bunton

Spring skiing has its attractions: good, fast, forgiving corn snow, the prospect of camping on a grassed melt-out and not having to melt snow for water all the time...and just as well! Spring skiing can be thirsty work, plodding up those big slopes only to zoom down again and then do it as often as time and enthusiasm permit. But how do you quench your thirst when that tantalising creek is at the bottom of a deep, funnelling snow-hole out of which you know you'd never be able to climb. The answer to this problem is the ski cup.

All that is required is to affix a loop of shock-cord (3 millimetre bungee) round your favourite plastic cup and carry that minimal amount of weight in your day pack. With hardly any effort you can turn your ski stick into a ladle and have a drink without the risk of drowning when those unstable snow-bridges collapse! The only trick involved is adjusting the size of the loop in such a way that it fits over the handle end of your stick and then becomes tight round the cup. A loop large enough to fit over the basket probably won't hold the cup securely enough when it is full of water.

To your health, cheers...bottoms up! ■

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

RUCKSACKS

Roaming buffalo

The latest rucksacks on offer from Tatonka include the *Spire Rock* and *Yucatan* series. There are three in the *Spire Rock* series, with a capacity of 50+, 60+ and 70+ litres, and their narrow design makes them ideal for climbers, skiers and the like. RRP \$235, \$245 and \$255,



Tatonka Spire Rock series rucksacks. Right, Fairlydown Superlite sleeping-bag.

respectively. There are two packs in the *Yucatan* series with capacities of 45+ (RRP \$190) and 55+ litres (RRP \$205).

One's eyes are drawn immediately to the appearance of the waist/hip-belt, which looks and feels much sturdier than those on many other rucksacks. All the above rucksacks have extendible lids to increase the pack's basic capacity by about ten litres, two inner compartments that can be converted into one

large one, and various attachment points for items of gear. All Tatonka rucksacks are distributed by Outdoor Survival Australia.

SLEEPING-BAGS

Cutting a few zeds

The recent introduction of sleeping-bags with provision for a mat-sleeve underneath has prompted Fairlydown to produce its own bag aimed at enthusiasts of extremely lightweight gear. The *Superlite* is a mummy-shaped sleeping-bag with an Entrant outer fabric and a fill weight of 450 grams of superdown 90/10. It retains heat by the use of an exaggerated 'mummy' shape—a narrow foot and broad shoulder area (allowing room for the user to wear a down jacket). As well, the foot of the bag is pointed so that the bag 'follows' the sleeper as he/she moves during the night. Other features include a half-length side zip, a draw-cord hood and a shoulder draw-cord to lock the bag round the user's shoulder.

(a handy addition to prevent heat loss). So you should be able to sleep warm and travel light. Total weight 1100 grams. RRP \$415.

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR

Talking down

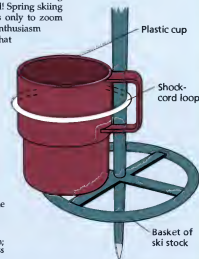
The relative merits of DryLoft were mentioned in *Equipment* in *Wild* no 54; needless to say that its main function is to keep insulation dry. That's probably why Fairlydown has used it as an outer fabric for its 90/10 superdown-filled *Yak Jacket*. This bum-length warm top is sealed by a full-length zip (and buttons) and features two touch-tape side pockets, a waist draw-cord, and a Polartec-lined collar to prevent an itchy neck. RRP \$299.

Like the *Yak Jacket*, the *Penguin Vest Superdown* top has a DryLoft outer and features a full-length zip, two zip front pockets and a Polartec-lined collar. RRP \$195.

The right formula

Designed for multisport activities (including ski touring) Fairlydown's 'Lightweight Series' waterproof clothing includes the *Formula Pants* and the *Advantage Anorak*, both made from three-layer ripstop Gore-Tex. The *Formula Pants* have an elasticised waist, a 30 centimetre leg zip and an internal touch-tape pocket. RRP \$199.

For a complete 'outfit' you can purchase the *Advantage Anorak*, which is cut lower at the back than traditional anoraks to keep your lower back and buttocks dry. In fine weather, the hood can be folded away, and the garment has a waist draw-cord. Another 'Advantage' is that the anorak can be folded into its own front pocket/pouch and converted into a small bum-bag with buckle and strap. And if you've bought the *Formula Pants*, you'll find that they'll fit into the bum-bag as well—together they weigh only 800 grams. RRP \$299 (anorak only).



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EQUIPMENT

MISCELLANEOUS

Prime time

To be released shortly into the Australian outdoor market by *Industrial and Gas Products* is a new, lightweight, gas stove from *Primus*, weighing in at about 100 grams. The *Titanium Stove* is light by virtue of the titanium (what else?) material used in its construction, and the stove includes wind-guards and a pot stand. When collapsed the stove's dimensions are 125 x 85 x 24 millimetres and *Primus* claims that the stove will bring one litre of water to a boil in three minutes. It will sell for around \$270.

Of rested buttock

With the introduction over the last few years of padded seats—which generally comprise a shell that slips over some form of padding



Crazy Creek Chair.

and then uses straps and buckles to position the seat at an angle—relaxing in the wilds has never been so easy. Distributed by *Intertek* is a new series of seats from *Crazy Creek*. The range starts with the *Chair* (closed-cell foam padding) and increases in comfort up to the *Thermal Lounger* which, like its *Therm-a-Rest R Chair Kit* counterpart from *Grant Minireini Agencies*, is designed to fit over a *Therm-a-Rest* mattress. When not in use, most models can be laid out flat and used as mattresses. Apart from the obvious comfort these seats provide, they insulate well and help to keep backs (and backsides) warm. Most models come in a variety of sizes. Prices for *Crazy Creek* seats start at RRP \$89.95. The range of seats is obtainable from *Intertek* shops.

Attention Nikwax users!

We've been informed that the waterproofing agent *Liquid Nikwax* has been replaced by a new product, *Leather Cleaner & Conditioner*. Apart from the functions of *Liquid Nikwax*, the new cleaner is claimed to tan and condition leather, can be applied to wet leather, and will not over-soften already conditioned leather. ■

New products (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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Tasmanian peak-bagging made easy?

BOOKS

The Abels—Tasmania's Mountains over 1100 m High, Volume One and The Tables

edited by Bill Wilkinson (Tasmanian Outdoors Collection, 1994, RRP *Volume One* \$34.50 [soft cover], \$44.50 [hard cover], *The Tables* \$17.95, from TOC, PO Box 224, Kings Meadow, Tas 7249).

These two books are the most exciting publications about Australian bushwalking in years. *Volume One* is a well-researched book of extremely high quality which describes every mountain in Tasmania of 1100 metres or more in height and with a drop of at least 150 metres on all sides ('the Abels') outside the South-west (which will be covered by *Volume Two*). Generally, a peak is described on each page. The description includes information on nomenclature and history as well as brief track notes and a colour photograph of the mountain. The approaches to every Abel are shown on simple sketch maps.

These books are a unique source of comprehensive information and inspiration regarding many of the most desirable summits in Australia, and Tasmanian bushwalking—or at least campfire discussion about it—will never be the same again.

If you think the poms are neurotic about their blessed Munros, you're in for a nasty shock once these books get around. I found myself involuntarily tallying up how many of the Abels I had 'bagged'. (Not enough, and I have resolved to do something about it before my friends get wind of the paucity of my 'bag'.)

handbook envisages a desire to travel internationally, so a range of situations is considered.

The illustrations are excellent, and the diagrams and other explanatory material also very clear.

There is a wealth of tips on the outdoors—everything from building a quince (a type of snow-shelter) to sharpening a knife; a very good navigation section, and well-illustrated first aid advice.

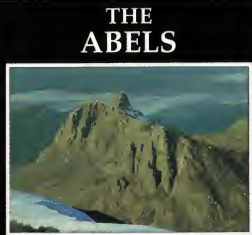
This book is attractive, comprehensive, and easy to follow, and despite its wide scope it is not too heavy to carry around.

Brian Walters

Skis on the Brindabellas

by Matthew Higgins (Tabletop Press, 1995, RRP \$25).

Until I picked up this book, I was not even aware that there was any significant skiing on the Brindabellas, but I now realise that they have had a considerable impact on skiing in



TASMANIA'S MOUNTAINS OVER 1100m HIGH

VOLUME ONE
EDITED BY
BILL WILKINSON

TOC

The Tables is a relatively slim black-and-white summary of the vital statistics of all the Abels: peak name, height, map sheets, grid reference and—ominously—'date' (in which column you record the date of your ascent!) There are also simple sketch maps and pleasing photos of some of the peaks. How many Abels have you bagged? As I said, bushwalking in Tasmania will never be the same!

Chris Baxter

The Backpacker's Handbook

by Hugh McManners (Harper Collins, 1995, RRP \$19.95).

What can a pom teach Australians about backpacking? Judging from this book, quite a lot.

The *Backpacker's Handbook* is written from an English perspective, and the descriptions of many things are tied to English conditions. At the same time, the

Australia. *Skis on the Brindabellas* outlines the history of skiing on this high ridge south-east of Canberra, and traces the rise and fall of skiing in the areas of Mt Franklin, Ginini and Gingera.

The book has been well researched. There are many interesting stories and tales (of woe, in a number of cases) of the exploits of the many individuals and groups who helped to develop the area as a major skiing ground



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Photo: Clem van der Knijff

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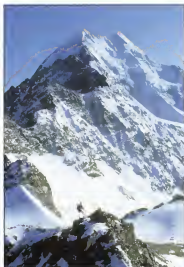
- Self-inflating. The mattresses will unroll and inflate unassisted.
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from the 1930s to the present. Some particularly interesting reports are of incidents involving access to the region in the early days. While the area was mainly developed for the purpose of downhill skiing, there are a few accounts of cross-country skiing trips, including a major 1963 crossing from Mt Franklin across the Snowy Mountains to Thredbo.

It is noteworthy that the Mt Franklin Chalet is one of the first buildings constructed anywhere in the Australian Alps specifically for skiers. Anyone with a genuine interest in the history of skiing in Australia will find *Skis on the Brindabellas* fascinating reading.

Glen van der Knijff

Camping and Tramping Australia's National Parks

by Karen Flavell (Reed Books Australia, 1994, RRP \$16.95).

It is a sad fact that many great walking and camping areas in Australia are not contained in parks. This book is limited to those which are.

That criticism aside, there is an abundance of information in this guidebook. It is a convenient size, and the sort of book which could be taken on a trip around Australia to provide a ready source of information on places to visit.

Organised into States and regions within States, the guide lists the parks. There is a map for each one and there are descriptions of things to look for on the way, of location and access, of camping and other facilities, of walks and attractions.

The writing is crisp and interesting: there are fact boxes (often about natural features such as special birds or animals). There is a good index and details of booking requirements are given.

The author has visited all these parks: an amazing research feat in itself.

For your big trip around Australia, this could be just the companion you need.

BW

The Rise and Fall of the Mt Hunter Tin Mine

by Ian McKellar (published by the author, 1993, RRP \$8.00, from Information Victoria, 318 Little Bourke St, Melbourne, Vic 3000).

Lovers of Wilson's Promontory will find this history of the mining debate at the north of the Prom fascinating. Lovers of National Parks everywhere will find it disturbing.

Mt Hunter was the site of a disastrous mining venture in the early years of this century —after the National Park had been declared. Following the expenditure of many thousands of pounds, the one and only sale of tin from the mine realised just £31.

It is a tale of greedy people gaining special favours from government. It is a tale of people having so many £ signs in their eyes that they ignored the evidence, and kept on gambling (with other people's money) well after it was clear that they were facing serious losses. It is a tale of damage to a park for private gain.

Sound familiar?

It took years to rectify the mess made by the miners, and the last of the land (long since abandoned) was finally acquired again for inclusion in the park in the 1980s.

REVIEWS

The book is well supported by historic photos, maps, diagrams and appendices.

BW

The Ultimate Australian Adventure Guide

edited by Chris Darwin and John Amy (Pan Macmillan, 1995, RRP \$19.95).

This book contains information on how to participate in a variety of 'adventures' from abseiling to white-water rafting.

There are some strange bedfellows here: four-wheel driving does not sit well with bushwalking, nor does horse-riding. There is even a chapter on 'paintball' (war games).

The guide is so eclectic that it cannot provide in-depth help to those who want some serious guidance in, say, bushwalking or any of the other specialist sports. The opportunity to contact some guide companies is given, but the information provided on each activity is of the most rudimentary kind.

Nevertheless, the book might well help visitors to Australia to find some contacts in the adventure of their choice. If there is something you would like to try for the first time, perhaps this could be a way to start.

Incidentally, the guide offers discounts for those who take it to the operators who are featured.

BW



MUSIC

Dreams of Wilderness

by Robert Rankin (Rankin Publishers, 1994, RRP \$24.95).

Robert Rankin has continued his foray into music with a second CD of five pieces evolved by some of Australia's best bush including Kakadu and the Western Arthurs.

The music is straightforward and predictable and in many ways lacks the attention to detail and fresh perspective characteristic of Rankin's photographic work. He makes heavy use of the 'swell' to effect mood. This works well in 'Over the Snowies' but becomes repetitive rather than thematic when used in a similar way in other pieces. The field recordings could have been included as an intrinsic part of most pieces rather than as a supplement at the start or finish. In some ways his compositions are better placed as background than as feature. In this sense, it works. ■

Philippa Lohmeyer

Publications for possible review are welcome. Send them to the Editor, WILD, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



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in
the
Way
of
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**NO
FEAR**



KEELHAULED!

Victoria's bureaucrats feel the strain



Brian Walters, in a review in *Wild* no 56, draws attention to the view of a Victorian parliamentary committee that the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources engaged in information suppression to the Parliament. This is news but isn't new.

In the previous two years I have experienced little other than obstruction and illiterate, pseudo-scientific disinformation masquerading as relevant comment from that department.

The department is secretive and partisan. Many departmental 'scientists' (some actually forestry technologists) with no training, skill or guidance in the academic humanities and social sciences (such as sociology, philosophy and, indeed, public consultation) conduct ham-fisted, transparently hypocritical and totally un-self-aware 'policy discussions' with the public and 'public consultations'—playing fast and loose, thinking themselves urbane and sophisticated, when they are intentionally confounding the mere competition for policy priority with the pretence that such debate (such as it is) is based in 'rational science'.

The principle is 'that there is no principle, just priorities'—the lowest ebb of the humbug democrat...

DCNR scientists should be appalled and ashamed by the hypocrisy of its policies.

The department does, however, pursue world 'best practice' in image engineering. To wit—its stand at the last Royal Melbourne Show, much of its promotional literature, its videos at the Orbost Rainforest Centre and the Toolang Forest Centre itself.

It is not actual scientific advice which it implements but a marketing brief ramified with rationalisation supplied by 'science'.

Brian writes, 'It is time this department was completely overhauled'.

'Keelhauled' would be just the beginning! There is a deep problem with leaving administrative power vested in these bodies because a 'bureaucrat' gets it in the end.

Where went advice to the minister without fear or favour? Advice such as: 'The resource just isn't there. Compensate timber licence holders and timber workers and revoke native forest licences where cutting is ecologically unsustainable...'.

Stephen Tyrrell
Bendoc, Vic

I refer to the article appearing in the Green Pages of *Wild* no 55 which comments on some of the conclusions that are contained in the report of the Alpine Resorts Commission Review Panel.

While I appreciate your preference to focus on those aspects of the report which coincide with the 'green' viewpoint, it could be inferred from the tone of your article that the ARC has no interest whatsoever in environmental matters. Of course anyone reaching that conclusion would be quite incorrect and to demonstrate this I would like to list for you those environmental actions and initiatives that have recently been undertaken by this commission: environmental management policy...alpine ecology training...feral animal control...waste management initiatives...landcare training...research into sewage disposal...water monitoring at Mt Stirling...

I hope that this list, in combination with the catalogue of ARC environmental research projects that is included in the Review Panel report, might persuade your readers that the ARC is not unaware of the environmental factor and its importance in planning the development of alpine resorts.

Finally, you may care to note that the position of Manager ARC Technical and Scientific Services has been filled since May last year by a senior, executive-level officer on secondment from the DCNR. It is considered that this expertise, supplemented by appropriate consultancy advice when required, is sufficient to manage the over 100 square kilometres of valuable and sensitive alpine environment for which the ARC is responsible.

PA Howarth
Chief Executive Officer
Alpine Resorts Commission
Box Hill, Vic

(All the ARC's commissioners ceased to hold office shortly after we received this letter [see Green Pages], Editor)

Gubba knows best?

In reply to your article 'Mabo and National Parks' in *Wild* no 50 on management of heritage areas/wilderness areas/National Parks and Mr Mosley's position statement, I wish to object in terms some will describe as unseemly. That is, that Mr Mosley's rationale is one of Eurocentrism/paternalism best fitting the colonisation of the Congo and German East Africa. At the least he displays methodology and attitudinal practices reminiscent of 1950s Australia.

The issue of traditional lands he deems as National Parks/'wilderness'/World Heritage Areas are by his definition to be beyond control of those guaranteed full title to occupy, hunt and gather according to cultural values. These values have not been debated

to the passive consumption of most of Australian and western society.

It is not his assumed right to dictate 'conservation' (preservation) practices on the role of 'gubba knows best' exemplified by Queensland and Western Australia. He further compounds this aberrant logic inferring that 'the wider interests of the community and the world' must be given primacy because 'Aborigines' (literally 'from the beginning') have limited understanding of Eurocentric values. This is cultural imperialism and rabble-royal that Drs Eysenk and Goebbels would applaud.

Practical management strategies have always existed in Aboriginal Australia by use of totemic and other restrictions. Current 'codes of management' by benign neglect do little but degrade humanity to a role of passive observer/consumer...

I resisted reply to this racist dogma until lack of response by readers gave tacit approval of such tripe...

RV Shaper
Randwick, NSW

I find a number of letters that appeared in the past few issues of *Wildfire* regarding the impact population growth has on our fragile environment very depressing.

Most people would agree that the degradation of the earth's environment has reached a critical point and, as has often been pointed out, the current rate of population growth is only making it worse. However, it is a pity that some people (hopefully only a minority) obviously do not understand that the population problem is a global one and is not bounded by national boundaries or cultures.

It is naive for one to indulge in the fantasy that if Australia closes its door to immigration it could maintain zero population growth (R Jamieson, *Wildfire*, *Wild* no 54) and keep the continent forever beautiful while the rest of the world rots away. For example, the effects of population explosion in less developed countries due to the disappearance of rain forests will not affect more developed countries like Australia much less than anyone else.

Of course, people who use the environment as an issue against immigration are more cynical than naive. Their objections are typically specific to people from the 'Third World' countries who 'believe in the many-children family' (M Gray, *Wildfire*, *Wild* no 53); this is obviously designed to exclude west Europeans and North Americans. I doubt if there is any evidence that Australians



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originating from these 'Third World' countries do in fact have more children than those from more agreeable origins. Rather, the obvious differences are their colours, mother tongues and cultures.

Indeed zero population growth should be an aim—not only for all Australia but for the whole world! Let's keep in mind that the environment is a global issue. Segregation of races will not solve our environmental problem, education will.

Great magazine. Keep up the good work.

LS Kong
Kingsford NSW

Spare us the details

I would like to congratulate Roger Caffin on his article about water purification in *Wild* no 54. Unfortunately he spared us some details of the unpleasant symptoms of giardiasis. You will certainly know when you have giardia; your flatulence will be sulphurous (the smell of rotten eggs) and your bowel movements will be explosive and rapid in their onset. I was glad I had read *The Social Climbers* by Chris Darwin before going to South America so that I could recognise the symptoms. The misfortunes of the expeditioners provided most of the book's humour. The book also enlightened me to Flagyl, a cure which isn't as severe as Roger Caffin makes out.

A daily dose of Flagyl (2000 milligrams, a mammoth five tablets!) taken immediately works well as a 'morning after pill'. If this doesn't work—and I've never heard of it not working—continue the treatment of 400 milligrams (one tablet) thrice daily for a week. This treatment was recommended to me by several adventurous, well-travelled GP friends and is described in *MIMS Pharmaceutical Guide*. Flagyl is available over the counter in developing countries so that you can top up your supply should you need to. I recommend carrying Flagyl in any first aid kit and always travel overseas with copies of *MIMS* and the classic reference, *Medicine for Mountaineering*, published by The Mountaineers, Seattle.

I recommend the tincture of iodine sterilisation method with the 'drink now' and 'drink later' water-bottles. I boil my water for cups of tea and evening meals after it has stood for at least half an hour (not before, as mentioned with the Nepalese trekking companies). This tends to remove the iodine taste; either that, or it is lost in the food. When travelling I disguise the taste of cold drinking-water with cordial and trust that it is sterile, or I add two drops of iodine to it when I buy it. I never make up water cordial or powdered flavouring sachets in my water-bottles because the sugar residue promotes the growth of black fungal colonies. These taste foul and are nearly impossible to get rid of although chlorine bleach is semi-effective. This then leaves a residual chlorine taste which, of course, defeats the whole object of the exercise.

Nasty business, bugs!

Stephen Bunton
Mt Stuart, Tas

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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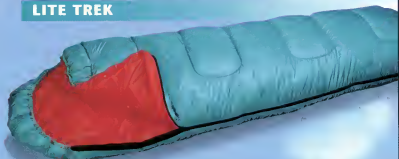
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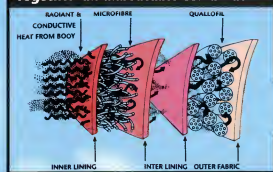
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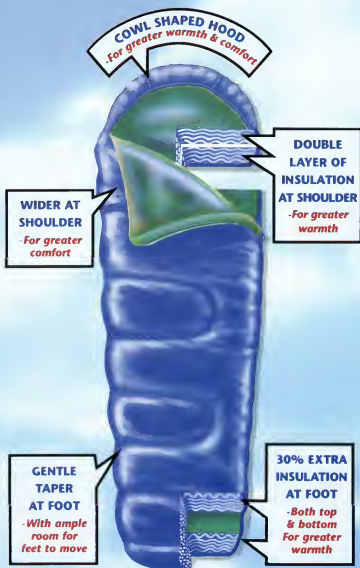
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| Temperature rating | 8°C |
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| Total weight | 920 g |
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| Construction | Stitch-free inner |
| Design: Tapered (not double-insulated) | Standard |
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|----------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Temperature rating | 0°C |
| Outside test temperature | -3°C |
| Inside probe | 24°C |
| Total weight | 1100 g |
| Fill + weight | Quallofil 500 g ● |
| Construction | Stitch-free inner |
| Draught tube and tape protector at zip | ✓ |
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| Stuff compression type | ✓ |
| Size, extended | 19 x 40 cm |
| Size, compressed | 19 x 30 cm |
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| | |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Temperature rating | -3°C |
| Outside test temperature | -6°C |
| Inside probe | 27°C |
| Total weight | 1400 g |
| Fill + weight | Quallofil 800 g ● |
| Construction | Stitch-free inner |
| Draught tube and tape protector at zip | ✓ |
| Water-repellent, breathable, 40 denier nylon | ✓ |
| Stuff compression type | ✓ |
| Size, extended | 21 x 45 cm |
| Size, compressed | 21 x 35 cm |
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|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Temperature rating | -8°C |
| Outside test temperature | -10°C |
| Inside probe | 27°C |
| Total weight | 1600 g |
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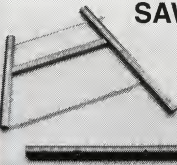
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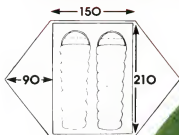
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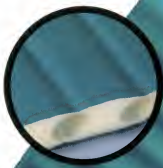


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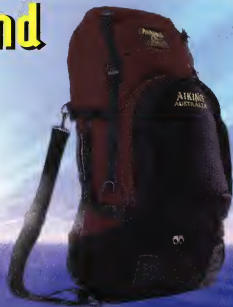
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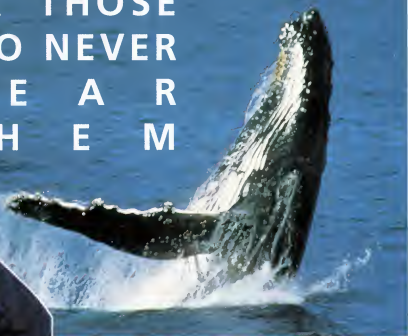


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Southern Ocean Humpback Whale - 'Roanne' 1994.
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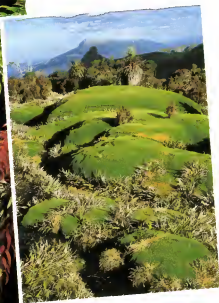


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WILD SHOT



In for a penny, in for a pound, David Jenkins is in it on the 'Sodden Loddon' Plains, en route to Freochmans Cap, Tasmania. *Simon Carter*

Wild welcomes slides for this page; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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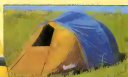
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Eureka!

WINDCHILL CAN KILL

The chill factor chart shows that from the winter streets of Brisbane through to 8000 metres on Everest, serious temperatures can be experienced.

COLDEST RECORDED TEMPERATURES
(from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology)
Stanthorpe Qld -11°C • Charlottes Pass NSW -22°C • Mt. Hotham Vic -12.8°C • Yongala SA -8.2°C • Stirling Ranges WA -6.7°C • Shannon Tas -13°C • Alice Springs NT -7.5°C

Add wind to these temperatures and if you don't have the right gear you could be in danger. The Mountain Designs Jetstream jacket is made from WindStopper™ fleece fabric. The Jetstream is totally and durably windproof, mammothly breathable and water- and snow-resistant. The WindStopper™ membrane breathes better than a cotton T-shirt.



Jet-stream winds on Makalu (8481 m) Photo: Michael Groom

WindStopper
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STOPS THE
WIND



CHILL FACTOR (Equal Temp on Exposed Flesh)

| WIND SPEED (KM/H) | AIR TEMPERATURES (°C) | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | 70 | 60 | 50 | 40 | 30 | 20 | 10 | 8 | 4 | 0 |
| -7 | -14 | -20 | -27 | -33 | -40 | -46 | -52 | -59 | -65 | -64 |
| -13 | -19 | -26 | -32 | -39 | -45 | -51 | -58 | -64 | -64 | -64 |
| -12 | -18 | -25 | -31 | -37 | -43 | -49 | -56 | -62 | -62 | -62 |
| -11 | -17 | -23 | -29 | -35 | -41 | -47 | -53 | -59 | -59 | -59 |
| -8 | -14 | -20 | -25 | -31 | -37 | -43 | -48 | -54 | -54 | -54 |
| -5 | -10 | -15 | -21 | -26 | -31 | -36 | -42 | -47 | -47 | -47 |
| -4 | -8 | -13 | -17 | -22 | -26 | -31 | -35 | -35 | -35 | -35 |
| -2 | -6 | -10 | -14 | -18 | -22 | -26 | -30 | -34 | -34 | -34 |
| -1 | -5 | -9 | -13 | -17 | -21 | -25 | -29 | -33 | -33 | -33 |
| 0 | -4 | -8 | -12 | -16 | -20 | -24 | -28 | -32 | -32 | -32 |
| 1 | -3 | -7 | -11 | -15 | -19 | -23 | -27 | -31 | -31 | -31 |
| 2 | -2 | -6 | -10 | -14 | -18 | -22 | -26 | -30 | -30 | -30 |
| 3 | -1 | -5 | -9 | -13 | -17 | -21 | -25 | -29 | -29 | -29 |
| 4 | 0 | -4 | -8 | -12 | -16 | -20 | -24 | -28 | -28 | -28 |
| 5 | 0 | -4 | -8 | -12 | -16 | -20 | -24 | -28 | -28 | -28 |
| 6 | 0 | -4 | -8 | -12 | -16 | -20 | -24 | -28 | -28 | -28 |
| 7 | 0 | -4 | -8 | -12 | -16 | -20 | -24 | -28 | -28 | -28 |
| 8 | 0 | -4 | -8 | -12 | -16 | -20 | -24 | -28 | -28 | -28 |

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